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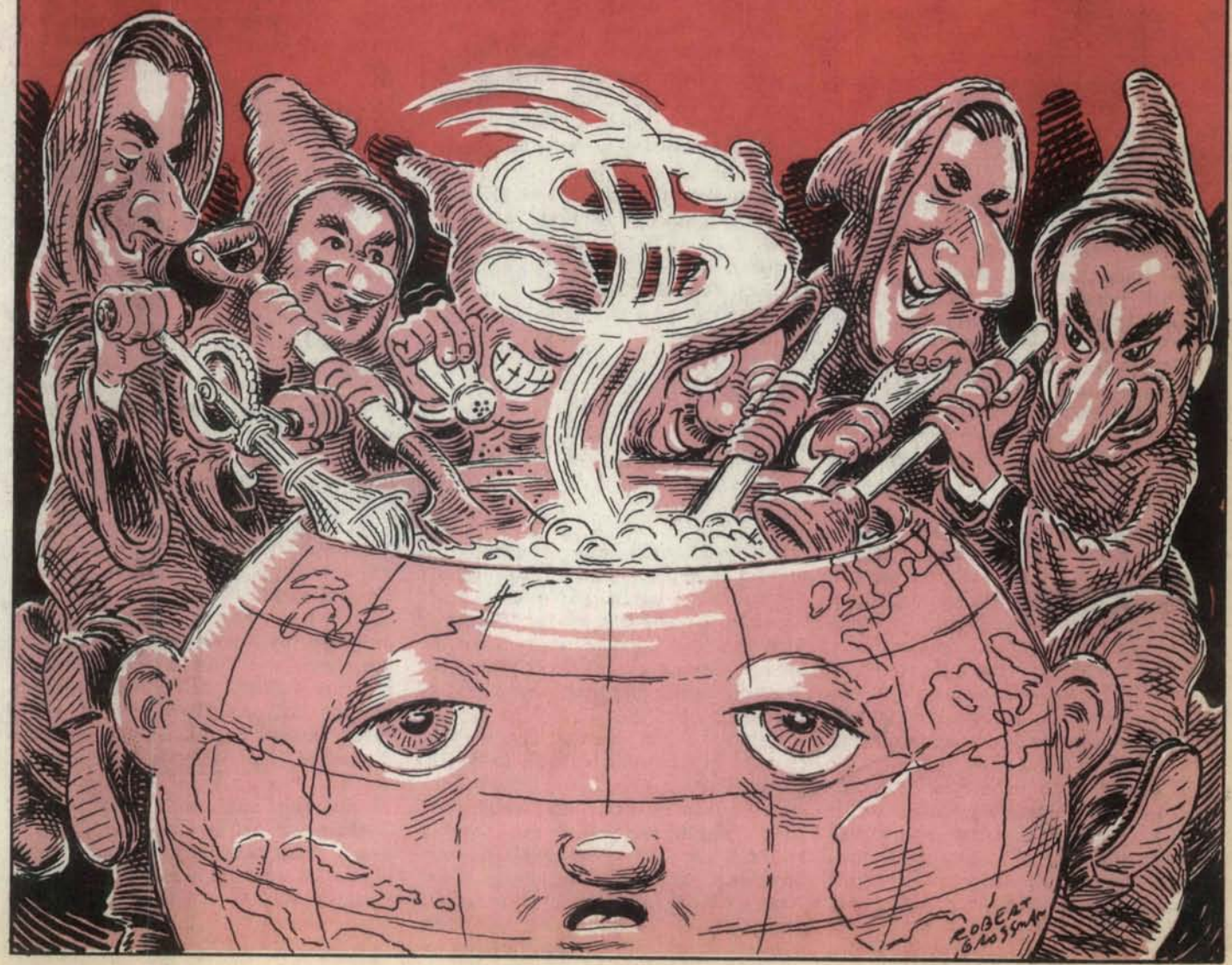
SPECIAL ISSUE

THE LORDS OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

BEN H. BAGDIKIAN



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LETTERS.

Abbie's Road

FREE AT LAST

Chicago

Abbie Hoffman was one of a kind: an imp, the joker, the Shakespearian fool who sees and suffers, clothing truth with wit. While Abbie was most like Lenny Bruce in his biting humor, his personal demons and his driven relentlessness, he chose again and again to forgo the logic of a Hollywood or professional comedian's career. He chose every time to hurl his brilliance into an indictment of injustice, hypocrisy and the powers that be.

Abbie was a friend as well as a thorn—a goad to do more and be better. I think he most loved the days on the Lower East Side, when he and like-minded anarchists, activists and dropouts staged theater by carrying thousands of bags of garbage on the subway from lower Manhattan to dump at the feet of the rich on the opening night of Lincoln Center, or when they dropped thousands of dollars from the gallery of the New York Stock Exchange. My own favorite was his announcement to the media that on Labor Day, 1969, several hundred Americans would kill themselves in their automobiles in protest against American bombing of Vietnam.

Abbie never gave up, never stopped risking himself in the interest of making a better world. He tirelessly educated a new generation of college students, nudging at their internalized sense of limits, challenging them to think that anything is possible. He fit himself into unlikely roles, living underground for several years, coping with jail, almost surviving the 1980s. He acted in concern with mass movements; he acted in the face of the void. Gentle man, existential man, knowing full well the reasons for despair, embodying imagination.

He insisted on calling me Bernie, which only my mother is allowed to do. He carried my kids on his shoulders at demonstrations. I knew him best at a low and uncertain time for us both, when I picked him up from a halfway house in Manhattan every morning and took him to his job at a drug treatment program in midtown. I too was newly back in public life. We were companions who made the unspoken assumption that there would be other waves to ride, new mornings. Abbie kept us all laughing, not with the cruel, divisive humor that is typically American—but joking about the banality of the powerful, the ludicrous nature of the human dilemma and the need to keep on pushing. Like all wise men, the child in Abbie kept the incongruities in focus; he used as his motor force the simple assumption that people want to be free. *Bernardine Dohrn*

HIGH HOPES

New York City

I first met Abbie in the early 1960s when, after he had returned from a stint of voter registration work in Mississippi, he established Liberty House, a New York outlet for knitted and other handmade products by black women in that state. When I walked into the store on Greenwich Village's Bleecker Street, fresh from representing Freedom Riders in Jackson, I was introduced by a friend to this highly frenetic man who quickly explained to me that he hoped to establish counterparts of his store throughout the North. He never succeeded in doing that, but for the three or four years of its existence Liberty House did manage to return a decent profit to the hundreds of Mississippi women who created its merchandise.

Although I didn't know it then, our first Bleecker Street handshake was to be followed by almost three decades of close contact. Undoubtedly, our most notable encounter was the half-year we spent together as lawyer and client in the 1969-70 Chicago conspiracy trial. In the tumultuous courtroom of Judge Julius Hoffman, I watched with a mixture of amazement and admiration as Abbie, with verve, wit and audacity, managed to hold a vengeful government at bay and eventually wrest victory out of what at first appeared to be a preordained defeat.

I have so many memories of what Abbie did in that Chicago courtroom that it is difficult to select any one particular episode over another. I do recall him doing a handstand on the railing that separated the spectators' section from the well of the court; bringing in a forbidden birthday cake for incarcerated co-defendant Bobby Seale; holding up a placard with attorney Leonard Weinglass's name correctly spelled on it whenever the judge, as he so frequently did, mispronounced it; and standing nightly on the street outside the Federal building with a sign proclaiming "Free the Jury" when the bus carrying the sequestered panel returned its members to their hotel. The press usually referred to acts such as these as "antics," but what they really represented was not only the outward manifestation of a truly free spirit but also the emergence of humor and ridicule as highly effective political weapons.

In the long run of history, Abbie will be remembered as the eternal and unrepentant Yippie who learned how to fight fire with fun. *William M. Kunstler*

'CELEBRATE ABBIE'

The Abbie Hoffman Activist Foundation is holding a memorial for Abbie Hoffman on Saturday, June 17, at the Palladium in New York City, from 1 P.M. to 5 P.M. All are welcome.

Speakers and performers for "Celebrate Abbie" include Norman Mailer, Kurt Vonnegut, Amy Carter, Allen Ginsberg, Christopher Hitchens, Ralph McGehee, Howard Zinn, Anita Hoffman, Sydney Schanberg, Daniel Ellsberg, Paul Krassner, Leonard Weinglass, Amiri Baraka, Victor Navasky, William Kunstler, Wavy Gravy, the Fugs, members of the Chicago 8. Also expected to attend are: Jesse Jackson, Odetta, Lily Tomlin, Peter, Paul and Mary, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Joan Baez, Joni Mitchell, Ritchie Havens, Ron Dellums, and a few other very special guests.

For more information on attending or making a tax-deductible contribution, please contact Abigale McGrath at the Off Center Theater, 1501 Broadway #1310, New York, NY 10036; (212) 768-3277.

IN THE NAME OF LOVE

Louisville, Ky.

In the early 1980s, while still on probation for selling cocaine, Abbie Hoffman came to Duke University and made fun of Smokey the Bear. Which was a crime, he said. One that could have landed him in jail had certain people been watching.

A Duke undergraduate at the time, I understood his action to mean that it is important and necessary to take risks for what one believes in, freedom of speech and expression being at issue in that case. So in the spirit of risk-taking, I stood up and invited Abbie back to the student coffeehouse at the end of his talk. Over tea and bagels, with a small, rapt crowd gathered around him, Abbie held forth on his version of participatory politics, and a lively version it was. I remember he was obnoxious, funny and obviously dedicated. The students and activists craned their necks to hear Abbie over the jazz music being played by Brother Yusef on the other side of the room. Yusef, a former heroin addict turned Black Muslim piano virtuoso, was the first person who ever called me "sister." I asked Yusef if he could turn down the volume, since Abbie Hoffman was visiting. For "Brother Abbie" he'd stop playing entirely, Yusef said, and he joined the circle.

Abbie was talking about civil disobedience, about breaking a law and going to prison in order to prevent more serious crimes from being committed. As he spoke about what it was like behind bars, he

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EDITORIALS.

Brotherly Media

Much has been made in recent days of the role of the media in bringing us words and pictures of the astonishing events in China. As *The New York Times* reported May 21, "Nothing so confirmed the power of television as a force in world opinion as the dramatic live broadcasts to the United States . . . of Chinese bureaucrats shutting the networks down." Certainly, it is true that governments around the world are losing grip on their power at least in part because they no longer control the international flow of information. As never before, the world media are agents of change, an unwitting force against injustice, exposing the reality of repression and dramatizing the depth of conviction of aggrieved citizenries. In a sense, "news" itself has become revolutionary.

But an ominous media counterrevolution is well under way, one far less encouraging for democracy than the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Western media moguls as various as Richard Snyder of Simon & Schuster and Robert Maxwell of Britain enthusiastically predict that by the end of the century, only a handful of megacompanies will control the world's information and entertainment networks; every sign suggests that they are right. From the concentration of international news management to the cloning of *Wheel of Fortune*, what hundreds of millions see, hear

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and read each day is becoming ever more politically and culturally homogenized. There is no small irony in this. For it is in the West, not the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe or China, that the outlets for dissident voices and idiosyncratic ideas are shrinking in number as conservative governments and business leaders combine to encourage Big Brother.

Few people know more about this dangerous trend than Ben H. Bagdikian, retired dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of *The Media Monopoly*. In 1983, when that book first came out, Bagdikian reported that fifty corporations controlled most of the newspaper, magazine, book, broadcast and film business in the United States. When the book's second edition appeared only four years later, twenty-nine companies held sway. The number is still dropping, not only in this country but worldwide, as Bagdikian amply demonstrates in his special report, "The Lords of the Global Village," beginning on page 805.

China Passage

In the days of the emperors, the end of a dynasty in China would be communicated through auguries: prophetic characters written on a rock discovered in a field, a scrap of silk found in the belly of a fish. Today we can rely on CNN to spread the news—but also to confuse and compromise its meaning.

The students who have thronged Beijing's Tiananmen Square for the past month take their place beside those clamoring for reform in the streets of Moscow and Leningrad, Warsaw and Gdansk. Together, they embody a moment in world history that bears comparison with 1789 and 1917—or perhaps more accurately with 1848, when a chain of revolts shook the ruling elites of one country after another.

It is impossible for anyone to predict where the Chinese struggle will end, and almost as hard to say what it means. Rarely have the images of a political struggle been so mediated. The cameras that have roamed China's cities since Mikhail Gorbachev's visit have found ten-foot models of the Statue of Liberty and students who can quote "Give me liberty or give me death." But that was only a fraction of what was being said. The Western media, though they would be pained to admit it, were a sideshow, an instrument of convenience for the students. It was the Gorbachev visit, hard on the heels of the death of former party leader and reform champion Hu Yaobang, that provided substance and focus. The students wore T-shirts that said "Welcome Mikhail Gorbachev"—in English. They sang "The Internationale," praised Boris Yeltsin as well as Patrick Henry, and showed greater interest in Polish reform than in South Korea's economic miracle (even if, in a further irony, they relied heavily on Western reports for their news of what was happening in Eastern Europe).

One hand-lettered cardboard placard said, with infinite ambiguity, "No class, no love." There was an echo in those words, and in their particular cadence (as there was in the dancing, the street theater and the general rock-concert atmosphere) of another date: 1968. For the students' protest can also be seen as China's version of the 1960s. This is the first Chinese generation to have been exposed to consumerism and influenced by TV. Just as some parts of the Western New Left embraced the Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution, so the Chinese students reach for foreign models and emblems, often half-digested, to fill the ideological vacuum left by a system that appears brain dead.

Like the revolt of the Western left in the 1960s, and of Soviet youth earlier in this decade, their rebellion may take deceptive forms. It may come clad in blue jeans and clutching imported rock CDs, but at bottom it insistently demands a more egalitarian and pluralistic society, turning its back on an old order that is monolithic and monochrome. The Chinese students, like their Western predecessors, seem little inclined to trust anyone over 30. Yesterday's icons of dissent—like the physicist Fang Lizhi, who inspired the student demonstrations of 1986—will always be haunted by earlier crackdowns; today's students have no such inhibiting memories.

The students' demands, to the extent that they have been clearly articulated, are still modest. They propose no assault on the citadels of the state; they have no master plan. There is nothing in their program or their strategy to explain the sudden massifying of their protest. Yet where a march of 10,000 was an extraordinary event, half a million is suddenly commonplace. What makes this possible is nothing less than a manifest crisis of the legitimacy of the state. In his account of the disintegration of the Shah's regime in Iran, Ryszard Kapuściński writes of a single pivotal encounter between a demonstrator and a soldier, who eventually backs down. From that moment, the logic of the conflict is altered. There have been dozens of these emblematic encounters on the streets of Beijing. All at once, an old woman is moved to lie down in front of an army truck; residents to offer popsicles to the incoming troops. In another echo of 1968, workers have given support to the students' struggle. Journalists, too, breaking with the party's abusive monopoly of information, have shifted their ideological loyalties. Most remarkably, there is the wavering of the army itself, displays of dissent by the officer corps, the reluctance of troops to enter the city, their astonishment at finding they have been hoodwinked by government stories of anarchy and mayhem. A People's Army that was thought of as the party's main prop seems instead to be taking its name literally.

For now, the party will retain power. But its nakedness has been exposed and it will not easily recover. The popular conclusion to draw—and we are bombarded by it daily—is that this is a further installment in the death of socialism and the triumph of the West. Not so. The Bush Administration's discomfiture at Deng Xiaoping's problems speaks volumes. The sirens of the West advised China to flood its markets with goodies and the people would be happy. But that was a fallacy, and the students have the evidence—the corruption of the party, which is what has resulted from China's unholy marriage between market reform and an unregenerated, closed political system.

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Deng's own children, in their abuse of family privilege, have become as symbolic of official corruption as Galina Brezhnev, perpetually drunk in her dacha, was of the "period of stagnation" in the Soviet Union. Sidney Jones of Asia Watch, who was in Beijing last month, heard one rhyming verse chanted softly in the streets. It gave five qualifications for Deng's chosen successor: He must be able to hold his liquor, dance the waltz and the fox trot, play bridge, fool around with women and make a killing on the foreign currency exchange market.

What the Beijing protests vindicate is not imported Western values but Gorbachev's main thesis: Economic reform is indispensable, but without political reform it is suicide. The students have recognized the urgent need for a Chinese version of *glasnost*—even though they may write the word, for the benefit of the visiting cameras, in the Roman rather than the Cyrillic alphabet.

People Power

The extraordinary events in China may prove the most startling achievement of all among the many populist mass movements that have emerged around the world during the past twelve years to challenge abuses of state power. Already, the students and their supporters have achieved much, including the letter of solidarity by seven former military commanders addressed to the Chinese government with its historic imperative: "The army must absolutely not shoot the people."

In country after country "people power" has demonstrated its potency against entrenched forces of dictatorial rule. In the background of the tumultuous developments in Tiananmen Square and elsewhere in China are the exciting successes of Solidarity in Poland, the anti-Marcos movement of the mid-1980s in the Philippines and the sequence of mass action demanding autonomy and democratic rights during recent months throughout the Soviet Union. Further in the background, but part of this new global play of political forces, is the Palestinian *intifada*, the democratizing campaign in Chile and student protests in South Korea. Still further from view are the toppling of the Shah by an unarmed mass movement of Iranians, the successful resistance by the Afghan people to Soviet aggression and the survival of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Television has created in the 1980s images of democratic inventiveness and potency under the most unfavorable of political circumstances. Part of what is hopeful about this new wave of revolutionary politics is that it rejects violence either altogether or as a primary tactic of challenge. The movements accept the overwhelming burden of casualties and tend to avoid taking up weaponry even when available. The new revolutionary leadership relies on a deep and courageous capacity to persevere in challenging existing forms of injustice no matter how heavy the cost in lives and suffering. Palestinian participants in the *intifada* express their confidence amid rending adversity by claiming to have "crossed the barrier of fear." At such a point, they say, the militarily superior side can continue to cause suffering and bloodshed, but it can no longer prevail.

What we are witnessing in Beijing, several countries in Eastern Europe, the Baltic states and some other Soviet republics is the building of a post-Leninist model of revolutionary action. The government, especially its party leadership and military arm, is challenged by the determined discontent of the people, and popular grievances are confirmed by media coverage. What is fascinating about this innovative style of radical politics is that it does not necessarily focus on the seizure of state power. The recent agreement between Solidarity and the Polish government is exemplary in this regard. These revolutionary projects contrast with earlier challenges directed at Communist and other autocratic governments, confrontations that tended to rely on violence and were quickly and often brutally suppressed.

The new revolutionary movement could be the most significant political development of the postwar era aside from the decolonization movement in Africa and Asia. It discloses the possibility of effectively defying repressive state power, and doing so without causing a bloodbath or deep resentments that lead inevitably to a cycle of one repressive elite succeeded by another. Of course, each national circumstance is distinct, and not all mass mobilizations realize their vision of democratization even when politically triumphant. As we all know, Ayatollah Khomeini betrayed the revolutionary hopes for democracy and human rights in Iran. It is evident that Corazon Aquino has been unable to deliver on the promises to protect human rights and end corruption that she made during the great popular victory that swept her to power in February 1986.

What we witness in these various movements is not yet the embodiment of theory. It is, however, a new, hopeful direction of revolutionary politics often based on demands to honor principles to which governments themselves have paid lip service. There is also evident here the great power of the media and the seeming capability of information to outshoot guns and tanks.

Of course, the struggle for humane and progressive governance is far from resolved by these tactical breakthroughs. It must be expected that there will be many adjustments in counterrevolutionary tactics in the years ahead. Already we have seen in China (as earlier in South Africa and Israel) harsh censorship decrees designed to insulate from media glare the encounter between state and society, to keep government brutality as conjectural and obscure as possible. Schemes to co-opt the democratic opposition by nominal concessions can also enfeeble a popular opposition long before it achieves its ends. Some fear that Solidarity has recently struck a Faustian bargain with the Polish state so as to obtain its status as a legitimate labor union. But the news from China suggests that, whatever the setbacks to come, a vastly encouraging new political age is aborning.

RICHARD FALK

Richard Falk is a member of The Nation*'s editorial board and Albert G. Milbank Professor at Princeton University.*

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

'Democracy' Is Not Enough

Transfixed by a million people in Tiananmen Square, the press seems unfazed by the fact that though some students plainly want capitalist democracy, others sing "The Internationale." Workers carry pictures of Mao. But then, these journalists don't seem to notice very much. How come, if Deng Xiaoping has been the most hated man in China, we had to wait for a million people to tell us the news? Speaking as one who has stood in a crowd of a million people—the demonstration in favor of a nuclear freeze, held on June 12, 1982, in New York's Central Park—I don't recall the press here getting quite so excited at the turnout. Some millions are more millionish than others.

I hope Deng goes down and his whole crowd with him. They promoted market relations within an authoritarian state, which is fascism. At least Gorbachev is going at it the other way round. The past decade has spelled long-term misfortune for most Chinese peasants and workers. Thatcherization in the countryside has led, as William Hinton observed in the *Monthly Review* for March, to a dispersal of social assets so great that "it is doubtful if, in the history of the world, any privileged group acquired more for less." The privileged in this case are those—mostly party functionaries urged to the pillage by the leadership—best positioned to loot the public economy.

So far as urban workers are concerned, Jim Petras points out in a fine article in the May/June *Against the Current* (7012 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48210) that they are losing the social benefits of communism and getting little in return, beyond "market discipline," linkage of wages to profits or a contract system hailing back to feudal times.

If 1905 in St. Petersburg, or 1968 in Paris, or 1986 in Manila taught us anything, it is that real political change takes more fuel than mass good will. Undesirable classes do not liquidate themselves voluntarily; vested power is not overwhelmed by yellow roses. "People power" can change the nature of the government but not the nature of the state, because although a mass of citizens can stop an army, as the second entry of the Little Red Book says, "To make a revolution, you need a revolutionary party." And there is no revolutionary party for those Chinese students to turn to.

The word "democracy" always needs footnotes. There was recently a "democratic" mayoral election in Los Angeles. About 20 percent of the eligible voters turned out, and the winner was a man, Tom Bradley, who in the recent portion of his long stay in City Hall has mostly represented the causes of real estate (local, Canadian, Japanese), in whose interest tens of thousands of the city's poorest people are about to be flung from their homes.

As Petras concluded, "The class lines are being drawn in the East [i.e., China] between the managerial supporters of the market and working-class defenders of democratic collectivism. It is time for those on the left in the West to also define themselves, because historical experience is demonstrating that one cannot be for both the market and socialism." Maybe you can have some market mechanisms within socialism that would make it work better, but that's not what the Chinese "reforms" have been all about. They're about restoring capitalism. I buy Petras's point.

Caesar's Wife: Fresh Slurs

The financial stratagems of Speaker Jim Wright have led to his ruin. The Justice Department announces an investigation into the dealings of House majority whip Tony Coelho and Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley with Drexel Burnham Lambert. Bradley may have had privileged insider treatment from junk-bond king Michael Milken. An associate of Milken's gave Coelho a $50,000 loan, undisclosed by the Congressman, similarly allowing him a privileged position in a leveraged buyout organized by Milken. Both Bradley and Coelho lobbied strenuously against a proposed closure of Milken's Beverly Hills office of Drexel. Milken's political associations now spell an enormous scandal. One of those is with Jesse Jackson, who tries to sell Milken as a man who brought capital resources within reach of the little guy.

The astounding thing here is that after all the tranquil reports of baroque financial chicanery throughout Ronald Reagan's sojourn in office, it is now Democrats, Jewish financiers and black politicians who are associated most keenly in the public mind with venality, despite the latest indications that former Housing Secretary Samuel Pierce arranged for enormous consulting fees from a HUD program to be paid to Republicans such as James Watt and Paul Manafort. The times are plainly propitious for an assault on the weight of money in the political system, the looting of public assets for private gain or bailout, corporate pay scales, the failures of capitalism and need for a fresh start. The Republicans plainly hope that satisfactory diversion can be engineered by a show trial of Milken, by Giuliani's mayoralty campaign as Dewey redivivus in New York, by the ruin of Coelho after Wright and by the harrying of Bradley and of California Assembly leader Willie Brown.

By the Chinese analogy, we may look forward to student sit-ins and hunger strikes in major American cities, with accompanying saturation media coverage, calls for a true democracy and an end to government corruption, sympathy marches by workers, refusal of National Guard and Army to move against protesters, paralysis of the government and collapse of state power. The truth, as you all know, is that when U.S. students do go on strike, the press does not notice, or dismisses it as funky sixties retro. When peaceful demonstrators are brutalized by police, as some were at a recent Cispes civil disobedience action in New York, the papers call them provocateurs, repeat police charges of assault and bury the story on the back pages.

Nest of Feathers

The networks are not particularly eager to delve into the matter of excessive executive compensation, for obvious reasons. The proxy statement released by CBS for its 1989 annual meeting of shareholders shows president and C.E.O. Laurence Tisch racking up $1,253,462 for fiscal 1988 in sal-

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

ary and bonuses. Howard Stringer, president of the CBS broadcast group, pulled in $800,000 in the same period and is scheduled to go to $900,000 by 1991. Gene Jankowski, chairman of the broadcast group, got $1,170,339 in salary, bonuses and cash payments. If you throw in the $713,770 amassed by Thomas Leahy, president of the CBS television network division, you find that among them the four men made $3,937,571, which is not profuse by the standards of modern-day corporate piggery but which nonetheless sits oddly with the fact that CBS apparently cannot afford a bureau in the Americas anywhere south of Miami.

Annals of the Freedom Fighters

"Soon after the offensive at Jalalabad began March 7, there were reports of government troops being slaughtered after they surrendered or were captured. In one case, as Western journalists watched, a truckload of prisoners being escorted by relatively moderate rebels was stopped by extremists who casually shot the captives to death." This was Mark Fineman of the *Los Angeles Times*, in a dispatch from Afghanistan published on May 22. Fineman's reporting has been outstanding.

Here's another report: "A motor column was supposed to bring dozens of women, children and old people from Jalalabad to Kabul. The buses and trucks were stopped by 'a band of Afghan extremists' led by Saudi Arabian advisers. The drivers were lined up on the shoulder of the highway and shot. Small children were held up by their hair, shot in the face and their corpses thrown into Kabul River. Pretty women from the convoy were dragged off into the mountains by the rebels. The rest of the refugees were shot on the spot."

The West German newspaper *Suddeutsche Zeitung* of April 18 relays this eyewitness account initially reported by Tass. I read the quotation in *Workers Vanguard*, which makes it all thirdhand, relayed through Commies of varying stripe, kidney and complexion. Who'd believe Commies when we have several years' worth of Western reports depicting your average member of the mujahedeen as Warren Beatty with a towel round his head, a *Doonesbury* anthology in his backpack and the Geneva Convention's prescriptions for treatment of prisoners committed to memory.

After years of trumpeting the mujahedeen's valor and popularity, some members of the U.S. press corps have been turning in creditable performances. John Kifner and even John F. Burns of *The New York Times* have done well. Indeed it was Burns who early on, at a moment when most newsrooms had Najibullah practically in the air and fleeing to Moscow, hinted that maybe the P.D.P.A. was stronger and the mujahedeen less puissant than commonly supposed.

Why has reporting become more forthright? After all, the United States continues to shovel money into Islamabad to finance Pakistan's invasion of Afghanistan, so by generally accepted accounting principles for state-influenced journalism, the U.S. press should still be loyally hailing the mujahedeen. It may be that these Western journalists, in their adventures through Kabul and Jalalabad and on the enormously risky helicopter trips between the two, have been under intense bombardment by the mujahedeen and have observed their missiles slaying, wounding and rendering homeless many civilians. Indiscriminate bombardment tends to concentrate reporters' minds, particularly if they are on the receiving end. A turning point in U.S. coverage of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon came when members of the press experienced the shelling and bombing from Sharon's gun emplacements and planes above West Beirut. After seeing children sliced to pieces by cluster bombs and tormented into insanity by phosphorous wounds, some reporters found it hard to issue the traditional endorsements of Israel's high moral standards in the conduct of war.

A second factor was the withdrawal from Kabul of U.S. Embassy officials, leaving a vacuum formerly inhabited by the mendacities of our old friend, the "Western diplomat." It's pleasing to recall that the man responsible for urging this flight from Kabul on Secretary of State Baker was Jon Glassman, chargé d'affaires at the embassy in Kabul, whom some may remember as the State Department functionary who presided over one of the first propaganda enterprises of the Reagan Administration: the misrepresentation of captured Salvadoran documents to create the basis for the Haig white paper of February 1981. The idea of withdrawing precipitately from Kabul was no doubt engendered from a mix of ignorance, false expectations and the desire to impress reporters with the imminence of a mujahedeen victory, but unlike many such enterprises in the Reagan years, some grounding in reality was necessary.

Whatever the reasons, almost every Western journalist was wrong back in March. The Russians have been getting it wrong too. Last August, Ellen Ray of the Institute for Media Analysis visited Afghanistan as part of a World Peace Council delegation. On their return, delegation members stopped in Moscow and held a press conference, eager to report that Afghan citizens had spoken positively about the National Reconciliation government; that in military barracks Afghan soldiers "were clearly supporting the government" and were not, as the Western press had claimed, just waiting for the Red Army to depart before turning their guns on Kabul; that so-called free tribesmen, who go back and forth across the Afghan-Pakistan border on camels, had told stories of being kidnapped, separated from their wives and children and forced to fight for the mujahedeen. But the journalists, exclusively from the Soviet press and assembled for the conference by the Soviet Peace Council, had no patience for such accounts, Ellen recalls. " 'Don't you think the Soviet Union was wrong to go into Afghanistan?' they kept asking. After the statements were made, the cameras were turned off and the story was forgotten." When Ellen returned home, a left newspaper she declined to name interviewed her but then decided against printing her analysis, assured of Kabul's imminent collapse.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN AND JEFFERSON MORLEY

■ Tortured by Silence

On October 5, 1988, an office of the U.S. government in San Salvador was raided and two employees of the State Department were detained and severely beaten by the U.S.-funded Salvadoran security forces. The State Department contends that El Salvador is a burgeoning democracy and denies that torture is a routine practice there. "It was an unfortunate incident and things are back on course," says one State Department official.

The two, Hector Maldanado and Carbelio Mejia, run the Salvadoran office of the Inter-American Foundation, a regional development organization funded mostly by the State Department and also by the Inter-American Development Bank. According to U.S. and Salvadoran sources familiar with the incident, the administrators and two accountants who work for the foundation were seized in the course of a midnight sweep of San Salvador conducted by an elite intelligence unit of the Treasury Police. The foundation's offices were also searched. Throughout the city more than twenty people were picked up, suspected of being "subversive."

Maldanado and Mejia were taken to a local military post, where they were interrogated about connections with left-wing guerrillas. During their forty hours of detention they were not allowed to sleep. Both of them were beaten, as was one of the accountants.

The next day U.S. Ambassador William Walker contacted the high command of the armed forces and secured the men's release. A week later Salvadoran Defense Minister Eugenio Vides Casanova wrote Maldanado and Mejia formal letters of apology, which the foundation refuses to release.

Neither the Inter-American Foundation nor the U.S. Embassy nor the State Department ever publicized the case. Adolfo Franco, deputy general counsel to the foundation, says, "We've concluded it was a case of mistaken identity and want to leave it at that."

The foundation is one of the few agencies of the U.S. government involved in sustainable, grass-roots development. Last year it gave away $1.7 million to ten Salvadoran groups. Since the arrests, the foundation's activities in El Salvador have been virtually halted. Mejia and Maldanado, both living in San Salvador, refuse to comment on the case. An associate said they fear for their lives.

■ Watt's Up

By nominating James Cason to be Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Special Services and F. Henry Habicht Jr. to be Deputy Administrator of the E.P.A., George Bush is mimicking a tactic of the early Reagan days, when the foxes were given the keys to the chicken coops.

Habicht dutifully served the Reagan Justice Department as Assistant Attorney General for Land and Natural Resources, responsible for overseeing environmental law enforcement, including the prosecution of Superfund cases. He left Justice in July 1987 and joined the law firm of William Ruckelshaus, who twice headed the E.P.A. At the time, Ruckelshaus was forming the Coalition on Superfund, an industry-backed group that sought to eliminate a major enforcement provision of the Superfund law [see Viveca Novak, "Hazardous Choice," *The Nation*, March 27]. A July 1987 Union Carbide memorandum, passed to us by Charles Rogers, the E.P.A.'s first press office director and now a freelance writer, states that Habicht began working for the coalition as soon as he left the Justice Department. The Senate Environment Committee, apparently untroubled by Habicht's fast trip through the revolving door, has approved his nomination.

Cason, who would oversee the U.S. Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service, may not have such an easy time. He is Bush's answer to James Watt, having learned much from the master when he served in Watt's Interior Department. As a Deputy Assistant Secretary at Interior, Cason tried to weaken the protection against strip-mining and attempted to prevent the Forest Service from publishing regulations to control oil and gas leasing in the national forests. (Last year he called for oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, explaining that nobody ever visits the place.) In 1987, when the staff of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed adding the spotted owl to the endangered species list—an action opposed by the timber industry—Cason reportedly said such a move would be made "over my dead body," and the Fish and Wildlife Service recommendation was reversed. In a letter to Bush protesting the nomination, nine environmental groups noted that Cason has sided with industry "on virtually every issue where environmental concerns conflicted with the desires of private interests to exploit the public lands for economic benefit." Senator Patrick Leahy, who chairs the Agriculture Committee, has ordered a thorough review of Cason's record.

■ We Hope He Didn't Bet on the *Contras*

As our colleague George Black noted in a May 22 editorial, baseball stars Nolan Ryan and Gary Carter went on a good-will road trip to Honduras in early 1986 at George Bush's request. Now telephone logs from Bush's vice presidential office indicate that the Administration had hoped to have Pete Rose on the squad. In fact, Rose was the first player who came to mind, according to John Ferch, then the U.S. Ambassador to Honduras. But a spokesperson for Rose says the ballplayer was never invited. Ferch says he cannot recall why Rose didn't make the lineup. Maybe, just maybe, intelligence reports revealed that Charlie Hustle is no fan of *contra*-aiding regimes and would not want to be a part of some geopolitical quid pro quo. (The spokesperson would not comment on Rose's political views.) But a question arises: Could his current misfortunes be the result of persecution due to his political beliefs? We would call for a Congressional investigation, but Congress's response to the disclosures of the North trial has been discouraging. If Capitol Hill can't get worked up about the Constitution, can you expect it to care about the integrity of baseball?

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ARTICLES.

CORNERING HEARTS AND MINDS

The Lords of the Global Village

BEN H. BAGDIKIAN

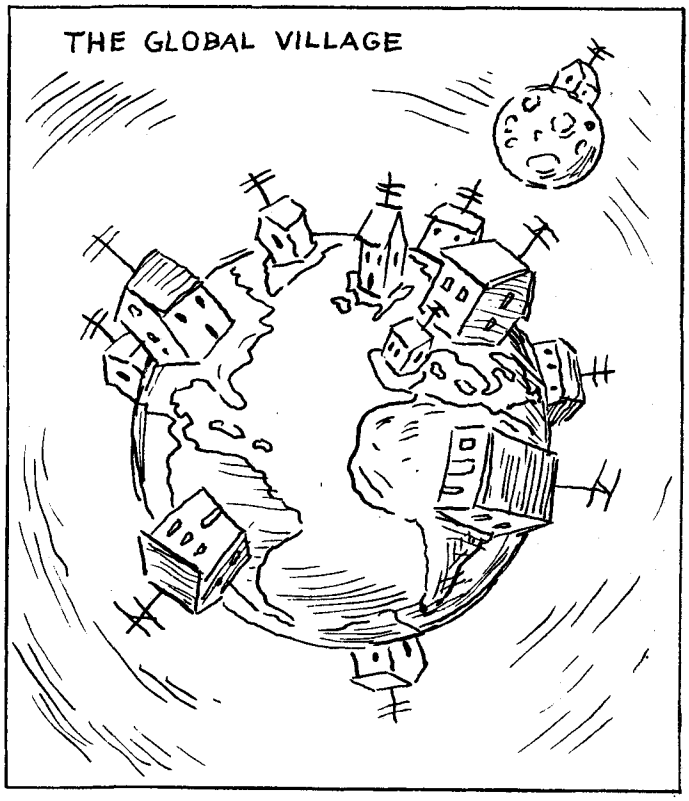
In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan promulgated the idea of a new "global village," a world knit together and transformed by television and other marvels of the electronic age. His popular book, *Understanding Media*, predicted that an information network would envelop the planet, spreading democracy and leading to "a Pentecostal condition of universal understanding and unity . . . a general cosmic consciousness." The global village is growing. *Glasnost* in the Soviet Union, stirrings in Eastern Europe and demands for openness in China all respond in real measure to images of freedom and dignity transmitted by the penetrating networks foreseen by McLuhan.

But in recent years there have grown other networks designed to penetrate the world with messages far from the enlightenment and openness of "a general cosmic consciousness." A handful of mammoth private organizations have begun to dominate the world's mass media. Most of them confidently announce that by the 1990s they—five to ten corporate giants—will control most of the world's important newspapers, magazines, books, broadcast stations, movies, recordings and videocassettes. Moreover, each of these planetary corporations plans to gather under its control every step in the information process, from creation of "the product" to all the various means by which modern technology delivers media messages to the public. "The product" is news, information, ideas, entertainment and popular culture; the public is the whole world.

The driving force for all this is simple: these closed corporate circuits are worth staggering sums. In 1979 the largest media merger in history was the Gannett newspaper chain's purchase of a billboard and television company for $362 million. Nine years later, Rupert Murdoch bought *TV Guide* and other magazines from Walter Annenberg's Triangle Publications for $3 billion. Only seven months later, the merger of Time Inc. and Warner Communications Inc. created the world's largest media firm, worth $18 billion. On April 9, Gulf + Western (Simon & Schuster books and Paramount Pictures), once the country's most diversified conglomerate, announced that it was entering the global race by selling all its nonmedia industries in order to concentrate on the new gold mine of planetary media, and after nearly half a century was changing its name to Paramount Communications Inc.

The men who run these empires are lords of the global village. Some, like Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell, are flamboyant figures known to much of the literate world. Some are so obscure that most Americans would be astonished to learn that much of what they read is published by a quiet figure from Gütersloh, West Germany. Others come and go in impersonal empires, in the gray anonymity that marks most large bureaucracies. But whatever the style, this new media royalty is bent on capitalizing on global technological and political trends.

New developments like fiber optics and satellites make it possible to publish and broadcast across the world's surface at ever greater speeds and lower costs. National boundaries grow increasingly meaningless: Already, the *Encyclopedia Americana* is published by the French, New American Library books by the British and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* by Americans. In many countries, particularly those in Western Europe, government broadcasting monopolies are giving way to commercial operations with advertising increasingly aimed at megamarkets that stretch across continents. It is no accident that media consolidation has paralleled a like trend among advertising agencies. The world's largest agency, Saatchi & Saatchi of London, has offices in eighty countries and buys 20 percent of the world's broadcast commercials, for clients like Procter & Gamble. Recently, the stock of the ad agency Ogilvy Group, one of the world's largest, rose 53 percent after a hostile takeover bid from the WPP Group of London. With the deal complete,



DRAWINGS BY ROBERT GROSSMAN

Ben H. Bagdikian is the author of The Media Monopoly *(Beacon). This article was underwritten in part by the Fund for Investigative Journalism; additional research was provided by Cara Letofsky and the Data Center of Oakland, California.*

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Rupert Murdoch

Rupert Murdoch may or may not be the most voracious media baron of them all, but he probably is the only one who ever prompted his critics to convene an entire conference devoted to dissecting him. This gathering of journalists and sundry others took place earlier this year in Sydney, Australia, where for three days various damning papers were presented, and the mood can best be summed up by the observation that Murdoch has become "the Magellan of the Information Age, splashing ashore on one continent after another."

Murdoch started his media voyage Down Under in 1954, after his father died and left him *The News* in Adelaide. He was content to toil there until 1960, when, at age 29, he began his empire-building by taking over the Norton newspapers in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. In those days Murdoch was a vocal socialist, supported the Labor Party and professed high journalistic ideals: "Unless we can return to the principles of public service," he said about that time, "we will lose our claim to be the Fourth Estate. What right have we to speak in the public interest when, too often, we are motivated by personal gain?"

In 1964, Murdoch appeared to be acting on those sentiments when he founded the continent's first national newspaper, a quality daily named *The Australian*. The country's journalists rejoiced, but not for long. For soon Murdoch was bending the paper to his increasingly conservative views. Betty Riddell, a poet and one of Australia's leading journalists, recalls that in the beginning Murdoch was always in the newsroom, could always be talked to and argued with. "Now it's all gone bad," she says. "Why? Power, not money."

Murdoch soon had plenty of both. In 1969 he splashed ashore in England and outbid Robert Maxwell for *News of the World*, befriending its chair, Sir William Carr, and then forcing him out soon after the deal was done, a standard Murdoch tactic. Stafford Somerfield, the paper's editor, was next. "I did not come all this way," Magellan said, "not to interfere."

Nor to settle for merely one newspaper. He bought the ailing *Sun* in 1969, and by 1977 it was the biggest-selling daily in the English-speaking world (circulation now 4 million). Murdoch lured readers into his tent by perfecting the prurient journalism that by now has become the standard at almost all his publications, a mix of lurid crime tales under souped-up headlines and pinups with their bare breasts pushing out of page three. Even the august *Times* and *Sunday Times* of London were not immune. After Murdoch acquired them in 1981 and they were too slow to introduce the titillation formula, a memorandum appeared demanding more sex. The next day *The Times* carried the headline, "How I Sold Myself to a Sex Club."

Murdoch unabashedly used his British papers to help Margaret Thatcher into power. The late Charles Douglas-Home, while editor of *The Times* under Murdoch, told the press lord's biographer, Thomas Kiernan: "Rupert and Mrs. Thatcher consult regularly on every important matter of policy. . . . Around here he's often jokingly referred to as Mr. Prime Minister." Murdoch wielded the same conservative clout in the United States, putting the editorial page and news columns of his sex-and-crime-crazed *New York Post* (sold in 1988) in the slavish service of the Reagan Administration.

One payoff was that Reagan's Federal Communications Commission permitted him to do what it had never allowed any other broadcaster in the country to do: acquire a new television station in a city where he also owned a daily newspaper, and keep both. That paved the way for Fox Broadcasting, Murdoch's chain of television stations in the United States. Not surprisingly, this so-called fourth network offers a steady diet of sex, violence and peeping-Tom programming.

Murdoch is a master at weaving his way through the complex laws that permit multinational corporations to escape taxes. He and his family own less than 50 percent of News Corporation Ltd., the Australian firm that is his base. The rest of the stock is safely in the hands of docile shareholders. Murdoch makes sure *not* to own 50 percent or more probably because, under U.S. tax regulations, that would increase his income taxes in this country. *Forbes* has calculated that in 1985, News Corporation profits were $101 million but were set at only $30 million in the United States because of U.S. tax accounting loopholes. Murdoch has built up a debt in the hundreds of millions in acquiring his empire. But this enormous obligation has its tax advantages, too, providing large deductions for interest paid to help offset the extraordinary profit levels and cash flows typical of the mass media.

Murdoch's acquisition technique is shrewd if informal. David Davis Jr., a publisher involved in one takeover, said it all happened so fast "I didn't know whether I'd made a deal or not. . . . They do everything on the phone or in hallways." A London *Times* staff member is less bewildered: "One minute he's swimming along with a smile, then snap! There's blood in the water. Your head's gone."

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WPP would be the world's second largest agency, with billings of $13.5 billion and operations in fifty-three countries.

Combining the thrust of all these corporate forces produces economic power that dwarfs that of many nations. The newly wed Time Warner, for example, has a total value of $18 billion, more than the combined gross domestic products of Jordan, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Albania, Laos, Liberia and Mali. And the corporate battle to dominate the international market is gathering momentum with the approach of 1992, the year when the twelve nations of the European Community are scheduled to meld into a single economic unit of 320 million consumers. Their estimated annual combined spending power will be one of the highest in the world, especially the unprecedented television audience [see William Fisher and Mark Schapiro, "Four Titans Carve Up European TV," *The Nation*, January 9/16].

The global media oligopoly is not visible to the eye of the consumer. Newsstands still display rows of newspapers and magazines in a dazzling variety of colors and subjects. Bookstores and libraries still offer miles of shelves stocked with individual volumes. Throughout the world, broadcast and cable channels continue to multiply, as do videocassettes and music recordings in dozens of languages. But if this bright kaleidoscope suddenly disappeared and was replaced by the corporate colophons of those who own this output, the collage would go gray with the names of the few media multinationals that now command the field.

This does not bode well for McLuhan's "universal understanding." The lords of the global village have their own political agenda. All resist economic changes that do not support their own financial interests. Together, they exert a homogenizing power over ideas, culture and commerce that affects populations larger than any in history. Neither Caesar nor Hitler, Franklin Roosevelt nor any Pope, has commanded as much power to shape the information on which so many people depend to make decisions about everything from whom to vote for to what to eat.

As the world heads into the last decade of the twentieth century, five media corporations dominate the fight for the hundreds of millions of minds in the global village. The rankings of the giants change, sometimes week by week, as they compete to take over more smaller companies. The Big Five are:

§*Time Warner Inc.* This merger would have seemed unimaginable to its forebears: Henry Luce, the Presbyterian missionary's son who built the Time Inc. magazine empire, and Harry and Jack Warner, sons of a Jewish peasant from Poland and creators of the Warner Brothers dream factory in Hollywood. Nor does the consolidation support Luce's oft-pronounced dictum that the twentieth was "the American century." One reason Time and Warner have merged is fear of the economic power of Europe and Japan.

The merged company has subsidiaries in Australia, Asia, Europe and Latin America and modestly insists it is "the world's leading direct marketer of information and entertainment." It is the largest magazine publisher in the United States, with the greatest single share of all magazine reve-

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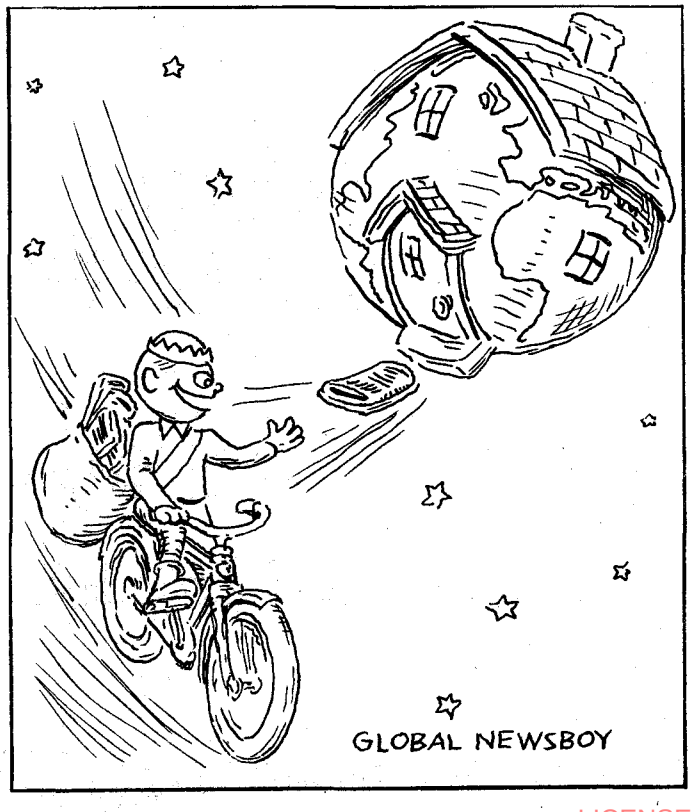
nues—flowing from *Time*, *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Fortune*, *People* and other periodicals—and a worldwide readership estimated at 120 million. The new corporation embraces Warner mass market paperbacks, Scott Foresman, Little Brown, Time-Life Books and the Book-of-the-Month Club, making it one of the world's largest dealers in books. It runs the world's second largest record company (WCI) and second largest cable TV operation, which includes American Television and Communications Corporation, Home Box Office and Cinemax pay television, which collectively have 23 million subscribers. And, of course, there is Warner Brothers.

Time and Warner have a total of 35,460 employees, with few vestiges of the idiosyncratic nature and personal touch of their founders. Thousands of shareholders now have to be satisfied, the largest being a number of banks, institutions not widely known for their interest in magazines, movies or television programming that push beyond the safe perimeters of conventional wisdom and popular entertainment.

§*Bertelsmann AG*. This German firm, founded in the mid-nineteenth century, is owned by Reinhard Mohn, who, given the magnitude of his international operations, is remarkably little-known (see page 810). Indeed, until the Time-Warner merger, Bertelsmann may have been the world's largest media corporation. Some time ago the company reached the limit of market share permitted in the West German print media by that country's tough Federal Cartel Office. The firm now concentrates on making acquisitions in the rest of the world, though it recently outbid two governmental public systems for a new TV satellite channel that will cover Germany. Bertelsmann's specialties are book clubs and book publishing. In the United States it owns Doubleday, Bantam Books, Dell and the Literary Guild book club, as well as RCA and Arista records. Its subsidiary, Gruner & Jahr, publishes some forty magazines, including *Parents* and *Young Miss* in the United States. Bertelsmann's reach extends to fifteen countries on four continents.



§*News Corporation Ltd*. This bland name denotes the domain of the global village's most compulsive empire-builder, Rupert Murdoch (see page 806). His Australia-based company claims more newspaper circulation than any other publisher in the world, about 14 million in that country, Great Britain and the United States. In Australia, Murdoch controls two-thirds of all newspaper circulation; in New Zealand he has a stake in almost a half. He owns 40 percent of the Australian Associated Press. In Britain he owns the biggest Sunday newspaper in the West, *News of the World* (circulation 5 million); the country's largest daily, *The Sun* (circulation 4 million); and the papers of the English upper class, the London daily and Sunday *Times*. His papers account for a third of all newspaper circulation in the nation. He also controls William Collins books, and owns 7 percent of the news service Reuters and 20 percent of Pearsons PLC (*Financial Times*, *The Economist* and Viking Penguin books). Murdoch's satellite channels blanket the continent, the largest satellite television system in Europe. In Asia, he owns the *South China Morning Post*.

Murdoch publishes daily papers in Boston and San Antonio, controls Fox Broadcasting, the fourth largest U.S. television network, and the 20th Century–Fox movie studio. He bought Harper & Row books in 1987. Just one of his magazines, *TV Guide*, has a circulation of 17 million. Besides that weekly, he owns *Seventeen*, *New York* and nine other periodicals, making him one of the largest publishers of magazines in the United States. He is also the largest publisher of evangelical Christian books in this country; presumably, most of his fundamentalist readers are unaware that he is also the world's principal purveyor of blood-and-breasts journalism.

§*Hachette SA* is the world's largest producer of magazines—seventy-four in ten countries, including *Elle* and *Paris-Match*. And it is the world's largest publisher of reference books, among them the *Encyclopedia Americana*, which the firm acquired in 1988 when it purchased the Grolier publishing house in the United States. Hachette, a French company, sells more than 30 percent of all books bought in that country and recently acquired Salvat of Spain, which offers the largest distribution network for printed works in the Spanish-speaking world. Jean-Luc Lagardere, the arms manufacturer who purchased Hachette in 1980 (see page 818), hopes soon to combine a major television operation with the company's Europe 1, the biggest radio network in France.

§*Capital Cities/ABC Inc*. has less global reach than its Big Five competitors, but through its ABC television network is a force to be reckoned with. Cap Cities, as it is known, owns eight local television and twenty-one radio stations around the United States, including outlets in most major cities. It also owns a chain of nine daily newspapers, including the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* and the Kansas City *Star and Times*; Hollywood studios; Word Inc., the coun-

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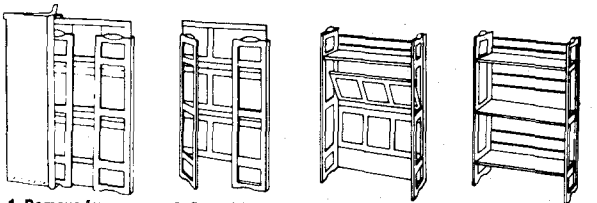

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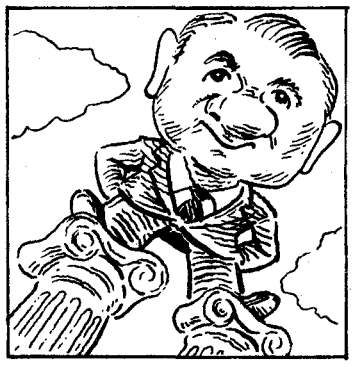
Reinhard Mohn



Reinhard Mohn presides over Bertelsmann AG, one of the largest media corporations in the world. He began this burgeoning empire in 1946 after returning to Gütersloh, his bombed-out hometown in northern Germany, with all his belongings in a potato sack. He had just spent more than two years as a prisoner of war in Concordia, Kansas, having been captured while an officer in Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Corps.

The family business, which had been publishing Protestant hymnals and religious pamphlets since 1835, was an empty shell. Mohn, a great-grandson of the founder, rooted about in the postwar ruins, pulling old books from the rubble of libraries and stores, bartering anything he could for waste paper that would hold print. Inspired by the example of the Book-of-the-Month Club, which he had learned about while a prisoner, he launched similar clubs on a smaller scale in Germany. His clubs now have 22 million members in twenty-two nations, making Bertelsmann the world's largest purveyor of such mail-order literature.

Over the years his leadership grew to combine the openness and dynamism of American society that had impressed him in Kansas with what was known in the German Army as *Auftragstaktik*: assigning a mission to a commander and giving him the freedom to decide how to make it succeed. He made this kind of decentralized management the rule at Bertelsmann, and clearly the formula works: Last year the company had 42,000 employees in twenty-five countries, revenues of more than $6.5 billion and net profits of $230 million. But for all the delegating, Mohn was the linchpin of the operation. "He is the sort of man from whom you could buy a used car with confidence but who will probably persuade you to buy two new ones instead," one veteran Mohn observer has remarked.

Inevitably, Mohn has made a few mistakes along the way. In 1979, Bertelsmann launched an American version of the high-quality German geographic magazine *GEO*. But the publication failed to catch on, and after two years it folded with losses of some $50 million. Nor does Bertelsmann always get its way in acquisitions abroad. In 1984 the company tried to buy *U.S. News & World Report* but was outbid by real estate entrepreneur Mortimer Zuckerman. And last year the British Office of Fair Trading blocked the conglomerate's efforts to purchase and then merge Britain's largest book club. But these momentary setbacks pale in comparison with the firm's biggest embarrassment: In 1984 its popular West German magazine *Stern*, with much fanfare, published "Hitler's diaries," only to discover they were a hoax.

Unlike many of his rivals, Mohn has not operated mainly with borrowed money. One reason is that his early plans were so ambitious they spooked most banks. To raise needed capital he created a nonvoting, profit-sharing stock plan that gives employees and some outsiders a stake in the company and provides the corporation with more than $200 million a year in investment income. The certificates pay annual dividends of 15 percent and in addition provide a substantial payout when an employee retires.

Mohn himself retired in 1981, following his own company rule that sets 60 as the age for stepping down. Though he has three sons, Mohn wanted none of the family power struggles that have broken or weakened other media empires, such as at Axel Springer Verlag, where a current fragmentation is causing much bitterness. None of Mohn's sons is an heir to the corporation. After his death operating control will go to a Bertelsmann charitable foundation.

Mohn remains Bertelsmann's chair, but the chief operating officer is his handpicked successor, Mark Woessner, 50 years old. In 1986 alone, under Woessner's aggressive leadership, Bertelsmann paid $475 million for the mammoth U.S. publishing firm Doubleday and $330 million for RCA Records. "Full integration of our U.S. units is moving faster than we thought," Woessner said last year. "Where do we go from here? We don't know exactly. I'd like to enlarge what I call our three pillars: Germany, Europe and America." The company also has ambitious plans to erect a fourth pillar in Asia.

Reinhard Mohn, the man who saved the firm and built the global pillars, leads a quiet life, though he is still chief of the company's supervisory board. He goes regularly to headquarters at 270 Carl Bertelsmann Strasse, a street named after his great-grandfather. The family owns 89 percent of the company's stock, which makes Mohn one of the world's richest men. But unlike his high-flying fellow media giants, the 69-year-old patriarch lives a spartan life, more in the style of a provincial businessman than a global billionaire, lunching occasionally in the employee cafeteria.

Modesty has not prevented pride of place, though —a pride that, typically, is useful for the firm. Gütersloh has a population of 80,000, there is no jet airport within a hundred miles and the express trains don't stop there; but Mohn has built an elegant hotel with what is reputed to be the finest kitchen in Westphalia.

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try's largest publisher of religious material; the ESPN cable sports channel; 38 percent of the Arts and Entertainment cable channel; and 33 percent of the Lifetime cable channel. Through Fairchild Publications, Cap Cities publishes *Women's Wear Daily* and twenty-nine other trade and specialized consumer magazines. While the company is not driven by a commanding personality, its largest single stockholder is Warren Buffett, whose holdings provide a glimpse of the kind of interlock that increasingly characterizes media ownership in much of the global village. With his family, Buffett controls Berkshire Hathaway, through which he owns the *Buffalo News*; is the second largest stockholder in The Washington Post Company; and has a 6 percent interest in Coca-Cola and therefore in Columbia Pictures, which the soft-drink company owns.

Inevitably, a number of midsize giants are pushing hard to displace one of the Big Five, or if that proves impossible, to grow big enough to expand the charmed inner circle. Coming on hardest may be Robert Maxwell, whose firm controls hundreds of publications in England alone, including the Mirror Group newspapers, with an estimated circulation of 10 million (see page 814). The International Thomson Organization of Canada is another contender, a conglomerate with subsidiaries in travel and business services as well as in the media. Like Gulf + Western, International Thomson is in the process of shucking off some nonmedia properties to concentrate on newspaper and other publishing ventures, and is planning a family merger with Thomson Newspapers Ltd. of Canada. Already Thomson Newspapers runs 116 dailies in the United States, more than any other chain operator.

The Gannett Company is the largest U.S. newspaper publisher, putting out *USA Today* and eighty-five other dailies, with a total circulation of 6.3 million. It is the country's second largest billboard firm, owns sixteen radio and ten television stations, and is newly active in Hollywood through GTG (Grant Tinker/Gannett) in producing television programming. Ted Turner's Turner Broadcasting System and General Electric, which owns the NBC television network, are also major actors on the scene.

Silvio Berlusconi dominates the Italian scene through his parent firm, Fininvest. Like Murdoch and Maxwell, Berlusconi is an ambitious operator who has become a strong European presence thanks to friendship with powerful politicians, particularly former Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi. Political influence permitted him to circumvent three Italian courts, which ruled that nationwide private broadcasting was illegal. He is a major newspaper publisher in Italy (*Il Giornale*), a partner in a major new commercial television channel in France (La Cinq), has a program production company for the growing commercial channels in Europe, owns 45 percent of Telefunf in West Germany and has stakes in Spain, Tunisia and Yugoslavia. TV Globo, the domain of Roberto Irineu Marinho of Brazil, is a leading producer of television soap operas around the world as well as owner of Brazil's largest newspaper, *O Globo*, and a television station in Monte Carlo that broadcasts to Italy. Televisa, owned by Emilio Azcarraga, has a monopoly on Mexican commercial television, with four private channels and five radio stations. Sony of Japan is still relatively small in global terms, but it owns CBS Records, the largest record company in the world, and is in the market for a major Hollywood studio.

One of the most durable inspirations in human folklore is the story of David and Goliath: Clever Little Guy knocks out Dumb Big Guy. And from time to time the Davids do still win. Just a few weeks ago, both Hachette and Maxwell Communications tried to capture *The National Enquirer*, America's premier checkout-counter tabloid (circulation 4.3 million). But they were outbid by Macfadden Holdings, a relatively small magazine company that paid $412.5 million for the sixty-one-year-old publication. Such victories are rare. Once the media giants want something, it is usually no contest.

Monopolistic power dominates many other industries, and most of them enjoy special treatment by the government. But media giants have two enormous advantages: They control the public image of national leaders who, as a result, fear and favor the media magnates' political agendas; and they control the information and entertainment that help establish the social, political and cultural attitudes of increasingly larger populations.

In the United States, Democratic and Republican Presidents alike worry as much about their treatment by NBC, ABC and CBS as they do about their treatment by their own parties. In their selection and emphasis of news and through their lobbying, the big media work for legislation favorable to all large corporations and against small firms and public-sector institutions. Both liberal Democratic and conservative Republican Administrations have given the big media corporations what they want in tax breaks and special exemptions from antitrust laws.

Twenty years ago, for example, a Republican President and a Democratic Congress gave publishers the Newspaper Preservation Act, which suspended the antitrust laws for many competing newspapers. Permitted to set up previously competing dailies as operating business partners, the new monopolies have raised prices and made life more precarious for hundreds of smaller newspapers. Even now, the nation's two largest newspaper chains, Gannett and Knight-Ridder (1988 combined profits: $521 million), have asked that their big Detroit dailies be exempted from antitrust laws because of business hardship. In his last days as Attorney General, Edwin Meese 3d overruled an administrative law judge and his own staff to give the companies what they wanted. Citizen groups in Detroit have appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Socialist government of François Mitterrand in France has continued the privatization of public television just as readily as the conservative regimes of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Helmut Kohl in Germany. In the Third World, global news and entertainment purveyors like the Associated Press, Reuters and U.S. television producers have swamped local news and culture. Despite thirty years of organized protest by Third World countries, the Western media presence has only grown.

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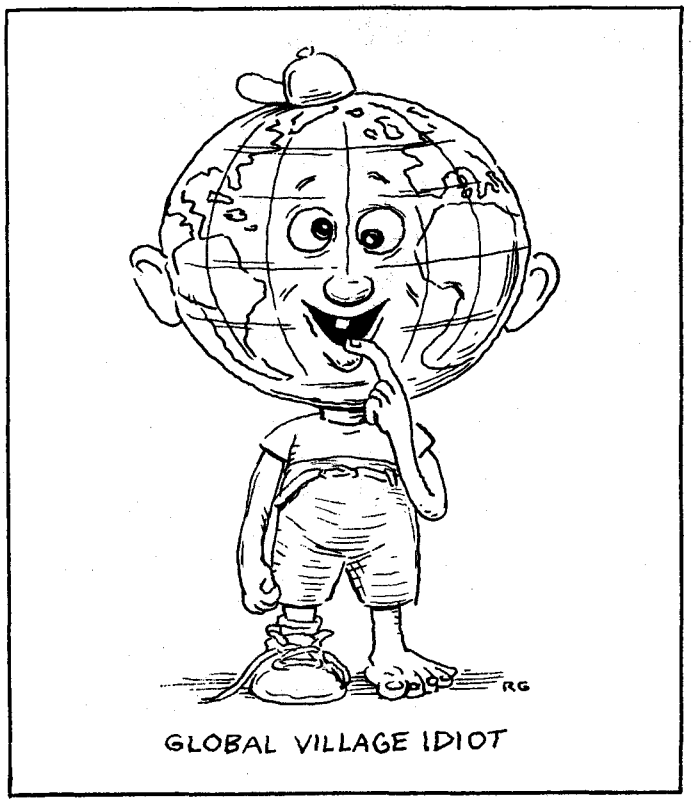
True freedom of information requires three conditions: the opportunity to read and watch anything available; a diversity of sources from which to choose; and media systems that provide access for those who wish to reach their fellow citizens. In democratic countries the first condition is generally met. But the media titans are reducing the scope of the other two everywhere as they take over more and more once-independent companies. The new giants are open to whatever will maximize profits, but in pursuit of that goal they are just as ready as any dictatorship to suppress or de-emphasize news or entertainment that might seriously question their power. And far from opening their systems to journalists, authors, dramatists, musicians and citizen groups, the big corporations are working to close them off to idiosyncratic outsiders and ideas. Theirs is a strategy of total control. They buy every possible means of delivery (print, broadcast, films, etc.). They strive to use their own rather than independently produced material. Then they convert it to as many forms of media as they control.

A dream sequence tantalizes the lords of the global village: Giant Corporation Inc. owns subsidiaries in every medium. One of its magazines buys (or commissions) an article that can be expanded into a book, whose author is widely interviewed in the company magazines and on its broadcast stations. The book is turned into a screenplay for the company movie studios, and the film is automatically booked into the company's chain of theaters. The movie has a sound track that is released on the company record label. The vocalist is turned into an instant celebrity by cover features in the company magazines and interviews on its television stations. The recording is played on the company's chain of Top 40 radio stations. The movie is eventually issued by the firm's videocassette division and shown on company television stations. After that, rerun rights to the movie are sold to other television stations around the world. And it all started with an article in the company magazine, whose editor selected it because it was recognized as having other uses within the company. The editor of the magazine is given a generous stock option. Every other editor and producer in the empire takes notice.



The dream dramatizes a term popular with firms that engineer mergers on Wall Street: "synergism," the creation of a whole greater than the sum of its parts. As Lee Isgur, a media analyst for PaineWebber, puts it, "The good companies must be integrated." Every major Hollywood studio has recently followed that advice, buying television stations and chains of movie theaters to guarantee outlets for their motion pictures. In 1948 the Supreme Court declared unified studio-theater ownership an illegal monopoly and forced the movie studios to divest themselves of theater chains. That move rejuvenated American movies, introducing independent and foreign films. But we now have a different Supreme Court and a different Justice Department. Monopoly is in, antitrust is out.

Every major record company has bought as many exclusive rights as it can get to the world's record and music libraries and sheet music. After Sony bought CBS Records last year, it purchased a company that owns exclusive rights to 35,000 songs. Simon & Schuster has a division that does nothing but promote *Star Trek* books, which also serves the *Star Trek* movies issued by Gulf + Western's other subsidiary, Paramount Pictures. When Rupert Murdoch opened his all-European satellite television channel, the newscasts relied heavily on the content of his newspapers in London. The movies made by his 20th Century–Fox studios are regularly run on his Fox Broadcasting television network.

A growing phenomenon in the book industry since the emergence of huge ownership is the emphasis on blockbuster books—those with potential for mass sales and conversion to movies, television, cassettes and rerun licensing. As a result, there has been a drop in the so-called midlist books, which rarely have great spinoff possibilities but nonetheless account for most lasting works in both fiction and nonfiction. After Bertelsmann purchased Doubleday the German conglomerate pruned the U.S. book publisher's trade list by a third.

The dominant companies are extraordinarily uniform in their content. The kind of trade books issued by Gulf + Western's Simon & Schuster are mostly the same as those issued by Robert Maxwell's Macmillan. The three American television networks daily present virtually indistinguishable information and entertainment programming, all aimed at creating a "buying mood" in an audience of millions and all using the same formulas, heavily laden with sex, violence and fantasy commercials.

Even the world's scholarly, scientific and technical journals are now largely controlled by the big media barons, Maxwell and Murdoch among them. Many of the most prestigious scientific societies have given publishing rights to corporations in order to save or make money. The resulting price increases for these unique sources of world learning

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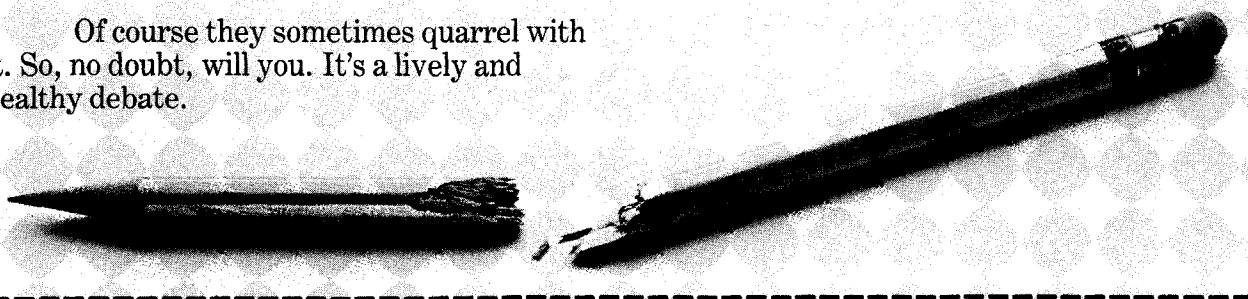

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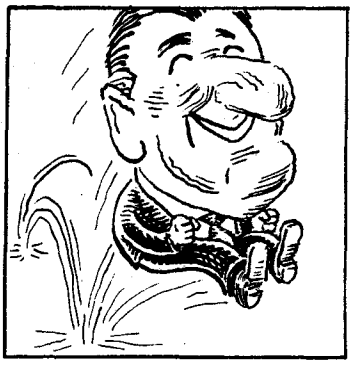
Robert Maxwell



On the eve of the war, Ludvik Hoch fled his native Czechoslovakia and arrived penniless in England, a Jewish refugee from the Nazis. He joined the British Army, changed his name to Ian Robert Maxwell, married Elisabeth Meynard, and has told interviewers that he promised his bride: "I shall win a Military Cross. I shall re-create a family. I shall make my fortune. I shall be Prime Minister of England."

The 65-year-old Maxwell has yet to move into 10 Downing Street, but he rose to the rank of captain in the army; Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery pinned the Military Cross on him for charging a German machine-gun nest; and he has made millions of pounds and a new family. Five years ago, he also predicted that "in ten years' time there will be only ten global corporations of communications. . . . I would expect to be one of them." His acquisition last year of the U.S. book publishing house Macmillan for $2.62 billion put him in the running. Maxwell started his empire with money borrowed from relatives, moving in on a field he now dominates: publishing and republishing scientific, scholarly and technical journals from all over the world through his subsidiary, Pergamon Press. His newspaper flagship in Britain is the *Daily Mirror*, whose circulation of 3.5 million is second only to his archrival Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* (4 million) and which shares *The Sun*'s enthusiasm for bottomless taste and topless women.

Also like Murdoch, Maxwell keeps tight personal control of company finances and makes corporate decisions quickly, free of the committee members, adviser-creditors and shareholders who must approve acquisitions in most other conglomerates. To an extraordinary degree for a global firm, his finances are a byzantine mixture of publicly traded securities and private funds that are difficult for outsiders to trace.

Unlike Murdoch and most other media moguls, Maxwell pursues moderately left politics. He regards himself as a socialist and has long been associated with the British Labor Party, which his papers support and which he represented in Parliament for a term in the 1960s. He is doubtless the only socialist in England with a private rooftop heliport.

Maxwell relishes the limelight and often travels the globe in his private jet with his own photographer to record his achievements, which he tends to announce with a flamboyance matched only by sartorial combinations such as lavender shirts and purple velvet bow ties. He contributes editorials to the *Daily Mirror* under the byline Charles Wilberforce, an atypical gesture of modesty. Nevertheless, when a reader wins one of the paper's ubiquitous lottery games, his or her picture runs against a background photograph of Maxwell.

When faced with bad publicity, Maxwell can forget about freedom of the press. Last year he mounted a series of lawsuits to try to stop publication of two critical biographies, preferring instead an authorized one by Joe Haines, political editor of the biographee's Mirror Group newspapers. The actions against the two unanointed authors, their publishers and printers failed, and Maxwell had to pay all court costs. Undeterred, he next instructed his solicitors to write British booksellers threatening further legal pursuit if they sold the two allegedly libelous biographies. Many stores caved in to this threat.

The Maxwell quest to be a major player in the international media sweepstakes has not always been smooth. Twenty years ago a financial scandal cost him control of Pergamon, then publicly traded, and also lost him his seat in Parliament. British securities authorities accused him of grossly inflating the company's prospects and said he "cannot be relied on to exercise proper stewardship of a publicly quoted company." Maxwell soon was nicknamed "the bouncing Czech," and Queen Elizabeth, apparently not an enthusiast, reportedly began calling her household spaniel "Maxwell."

But Maxwell the man bounced back and regained Pergamon as a privately held firm. He did it with the help of a family-controlled foundation in the tax haven of Liechtenstein. The precise nature of the Maxwell Foundation and its relationship to the rest of his empire has puzzled financial analysts. Maxwell recently transferred part of the foundation to Britain because Liechtenstein, not a member of the European Community, would be ineligible for any strictly EC enterprises Maxwell may explore as 1992 nears.

The Pergamon scandal and the secrecy surrounding some of Maxwell's financing over the years has hurt him in the current race among the communications giants, and he has yet to make it into the Big Five. Last year he noisily announced an important joint venture with the powerful Belgian holding company Société Générale de Belgique, only to have the Générale withdraw when it was unable to determine just where Maxwell would get the cash to pull off the deal. But he barely breaks stride after such setbacks and is even now entering a joint venture with McGraw-Hill Inc. in the United States.

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have forced university and other libraries to reduce the number of journals they buy. (For example, the price of *Early Child Development and Care* went up 145 percent last year.) The major computer data bases also are controlled by a few large firms, including the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain, which last year paid $353 million for Dialog Information Services, a data bank now available in eighty-nine nations. Even American government data are fast disappearing into private companies, which then lobby to forbid the government to make that data available free or inexpensively. The firms, which pay little or nothing for the data, complain that they are victims of "unfair competition with private enterprise."

Among the best-kept secrets that the giant media firms hide from their readers and viewers is the fact that they take more profit out of every consumer dollar than do smaller firms. This Law of Dominance is not the stuff of news stories or magazine articles about the mergers, acquisitions and takeovers that have created the juggernauts. It is, however, informative to listen to what merger midwives privately tell their investors. Speaking to such a group in 1986, Christopher Shaw, an American merger specialist, said that a monopoly newspaper making 15 percent profit a year is a splendid takeover target because by raising rates to subscribers and advertisers the new owner can soon be making a 40 percent annual profit.

And it is not necessary to have an old-fashioned monopoly, like the only grain store in a famine. Simply being much bigger than most competitors is enough. In its 1987 annual report, Time Inc. said, "Our competitors . . . can't duplicate the reach and clout of the eight magazines we're offering our advertisers." Murdoch told *The Wall Street Journal* that by acquiring *TV Guide*'s large circulation he will be able to force supermarkets and newsstands to give his other magazines more prominent space—if they want *TV Guide*.

An advertising agency, Backer Spielvogel Bates, examined media dominance by studying 2,746 businesses over four years. The survey found, according to a report in the *Financial Times* last January 12, that a "market dominator (a business with sales volume at least 1.5 times its nearest competitor) was 52 percent more profitable than its nearest rival, and 183 percent more profitable than the market followers." Market leaders averaged a 31 percent return on investment, compared with 11 percent for those ranked fourth or worse. The author of the report, Larry Light, wrote, "It is not sufficient to have superior quality."

Each nation and region of the world has its own strongly held cultural, political and religious values, and what sells in one country may be anathema in five others, as Viking Penguin, the British book publishing conglomerate, discovered when it released Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. The countries that have officially banned the novel have a collective population approaching 1 billion, many of them sharing the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's fury at the author and supporting his call for Rushdie's murder. An official of the publishing house said that because of the troubles, and despite large sales in some countries, "we can never, ever, sell enough copies to make money on this book."

Thus the global reach of the largest media firms, and their grand strategy of synergism, increases what already is a drug on the market: commercially safe, generic, all-purpose books, films and TV programs. And the bigger the corporation, the fewer risks it is likely to take. When *The Satanic Verses* was threatened, the biggest chain bookstores initially took the book off their shelves. Small bookstores kept the novel in stock; but then, risk-taking is the specialty of smaller firms.

Like the nuclear superpowers, the media Goliaths don't want to fight to the death, and surprisingly often they find it convenient to cooperate—always to the disadvantage of the Davids. Even archrivals like Murdoch and Maxwell cut deals with one another: On May 16 the two announced a five-year, multimillion-dollar agreement linking Murdoch's Sky Television PLC satellite operation with Maxwell Cable Television. Time Warner is a partner with Hachette and Mondadori in the French and Italian editions of *Fortune*. Berlusconi of Italy has a production project with Lorimar Telepictures, a subsidiary of Time Warner, and a similar arrangement for making television programs with Leo Kirch of Germany and Maxwell of Britain. Simon & Schuster buys Hachette's Regents Publishing, and Hachette buys an interest in the big Italian publishing firm Rizzoli-Corriere della Sera.

Many of the media magnates also indulge in another form of synergism: interlocks with financial and commercial operations that are affected by news, opinion and popular culture, and which can be either promoted or protected by the parent firm's media. While Capital Cities/ABC, for example, controls the ESPN cable channel, RJR Nabisco, the global food and tobacco company (and an important advertiser with ABC), has a 20 percent interest in ESPN. General Electric, a second-level giant in the media through its ownership of NBC, is a first-rank giant in world military and nuclear reactor production. And Hachette's chair, Jean-Luc Lagardere, is also chair of one of France's largest military defense contractors.

Earlier this year, soft-drink maker Pepsico paid more than $5 million for two minutes of TV time worldwide to air a commercial showing the rock star Madonna dancing through a church in her underwear. It was the largest purchase of television time in history, putting the Pepsi pitch in some forty countries and to an audience estimated at 250 million people. The commercial was adapted from the popular singer's latest music video, "Like a Prayer," and must have seemed to its creators a promotion that young people everywhere would find irresistible.

The Catholic Church, however, did not, not least because in the video (though not in the commercial) Madonna gives herself stigmata and jitterbugs in front of a row of burning crosses. Since Pepsico wants the church's communicants to

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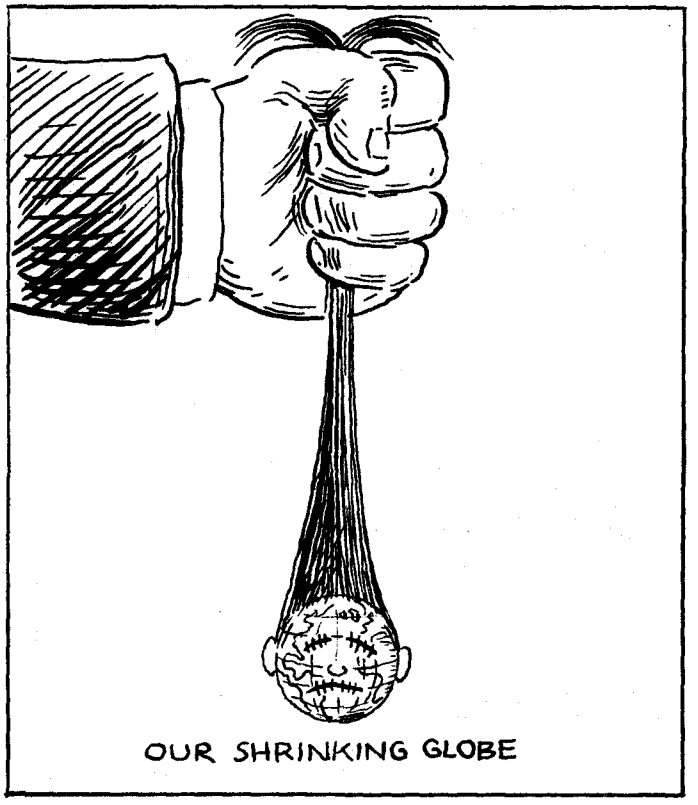
drink a great deal of its product, the commercial was shelved in the United States, at least for the time being. But Pepsico's second thoughts on that particular advertisement in no way alter the significance of the new media network multinational selling. For the lords of the global village are part of a powerful troika: themselves, the new worldwide advertising agencies and the multinational manufacturers of consumer goods. And this troika is already changing the cultural, social and political values in much of the world.

Affluence is growing in the developed world, and even the Third World, for all its grinding poverty, is an increasingly profitable market for imported goods. More than $200 billion a year is spent worldwide on advertising, and the leading multinational manufacturers of common commodities such as detergents, cosmetics, soft drinks and cigarettes want ever more channels to get their messages out. The great networks of advertising-supported media—newspapers, magazines, radio and television—are the outlets the multinational merchants and their ad agencies are looking for: There are more than 600 million television sets worldwide, with hundreds of millions yet to come.

Even though one station can carry up to 720 commercials a day, most national broadcast systems outside the United States are noncommercial, on which advertising is limited. But the political power of the manufacturing-advertising-media triumvirate is such that, with the aid of current trends toward deregulation and policies of uninhibited free-market economics, the broadcasting systems of Europe and elsewhere are being transformed. Noncommercial radio and television systems are being weakened or displaced by the global media companies, which are creating new commercial stations, cable systems and satellite channels.

Europe has far fewer commercial television stations than



OUR SHRINKING GLOBE

the United States. Their number is expected to triple in the EC in the coming years, but even then each station will have limited geographical reach. Consequently, there are plans for increased deployment of commercial satellites 22,000 miles in space, in geosynchronous orbit. Such hardware is capable of beaming down information, entertainment and commercials to large portions of the earth's surface, transmitting directly to homes and transcending national boundaries, national laws and national cultures. One satellite alone can cover a third of the planet's surface, though most commercial ones focus on less than that. By 1990 there will be more than forty new satellite channels broadcasting over Western Europe, to home receiving dishes and to local cable systems.

Satellite broadcasting is not for small entrepreneurs. It costs about $300 million to place a satellite in orbit, and about $200,000 a month to rent one of its channels. Rupert Murdoch has rented five channels on Astra, the most recent European launch. Astra offers a total of sixteen channels, each of which is capable of transmitting a video picture with four simultaneous audio channels to match, which could be used for four different languages.

By 1990 the new commercial channels will need 500,000 hours of television programming a year, a major motivation in the global binge to buy, among other things, production studios, recording companies and movie, video and record libraries. The major media firms that already control programs are staking out claims all over the world, including in formerly closed Communist societies. Ted Turner's Cable News Network, for example, has been negotiating with the Soviet Union to use some of its satellites to send his network to India and Pakistan, as well as to Egypt and other North African nations. And American firms already have rented time on Chinese satellites.

The shift in Europe to commercial channels has special appeal to conservative regimes because it is of a piece with the right-wing campaign to sell public-service functions to private entrepreneurs. Moreover, it accommodates the desires for increased broadcast advertising by multinational industrial and financial institutions, which are natural political allies of the conservatives. In Britain, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is creating new satellite commercial channels while trying to weaken the finances and audience reach of the state-run British Broadcasting Corporation, perhaps the best radio and television operation in the world. Her government's white paper on the future of British broadcasting calls for an end to fixed support for the BBC from license fees on receiving sets. Instead, the paper calls for substitution of pay channels and the loss of one all-night channel to a private contractor. In Germany last year, the conservative government of Helmut Kohl placed a public broadcast sports agreement out for bid (won by Bertelsmann). Kohl's government also licensed two new commercial channels to be distributed by cable, and has the government postal service laying the cable. Portugal's first commercial channel will be owned by the Catholic Church. In the United States, Ronald Reagan's Federal Communications Commission deregulated most of the airwaves and reduced

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Jean-Luc Lagardere

Jean-Luc Lagardere may look like a perfect model of the debonair Parisian, but his hero is John Wayne. Perhaps admiration of a mythic gunslinger is appropriate for a man who, at age 37, became head, and is still the chair, of one of the largest defense contractors in France, Matra SA. Besides manufacturing guided missiles and other tools of war, Matra builds subways and telephone systems and has joint ventures with Fiat of Italy, Daimler-Benz of West Germany and Wallenberg of Sweden.

But Lagardere wears more than one ten-gallon hat. He is also chair of a global media firm. At the age of 52, he won control of Hachette SA, an old publishing firm then in serious financial trouble. He displaced the great-great-grandson of the founder, Professor Louis Hachette, who in 1826 won the first newspaper concessions on the French railroad. The enterprising professor later started a small press in Paris (one of his editors was a young man named Émile Zola) and went on to become a major publisher and distributor.

In 1980, when Hachette was in trouble and its banks were searching for a savior, Lagardere managed the takeover partly with the support of his fellow conservative, Prime Minister Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. The interlock of a major defense firm with an important news and publishing company aroused objections; a Socialist first secretary called Lagardere a *marchand de canon* (munitions merchant). Lagardere promised to keep Hachette out of politics and most critics believe that he has, although when he speaks publicly in support of French conservatives, as he did for Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, his is not the voice of an average voter.

In the past decade Lagardere has built Hachette into France's largest communications company and one of the world's biggest. In France alone its operations encompass a range that includes the country's largest publisher of encyclopedias, the popular weekly *Paris-Match* and Europe 1, France's number two radio broadcaster and the base for his ambitions to play a major role in continental television. In 1987, when the French invited private bids for the government-owned television network, TF-1, Lagardere lost out to a consortium that included Britain's Robert Maxwell. But he remains determined to continue Hachette's growth into all the media. He has said that he saw the potential for diversification "well before other industrial groups started doing the same thing."

Like other foreign media giants, Lagardere has been shopping in the United States, starting slowly but expanding rapidly. Hachette, with its affiliated firm, Publications Filipachi, first entered the American magazine field in 1985 by launching the U.S. version of his slick French fashion magazine *Elle*. (Lagardere did this in a joint venture with Rupert Murdoch, a partnership that also launched the new American magazine *Premiere*. Lagardere has since bought Murdoch's half share in *Elle* and sold his stake in *Premiere* to Murdoch.) A year later Lagardere bought Curtis Circulation Company, the second largest magazine distributor in the United States. In 1988, Hachette became a major force in U.S. publishing. He paid $716 million to Diamandis Communications Inc. for twelve magazines (among them *Woman's Day*) and became the largest magazine publisher in the world. The same month he paid $450 million for Grolier Publications, which included such "American" titles as *Encyclopedia Americana*, *Disney's Wonderful World of Reading* and *Dr. Seuss's Beginning Readers Program*.

Lagardere told the *Financial Times* last year that he is profoundly committed to Europe, but believes "it is crucial to establish a bridge between Europe and North America." Yet his interest in that bridge has not prevented him from starting one to Asia as well. Matra sells ground-to-air missiles to China and last year Hachette launched a Chinese edition of *Elle*.

Lagardere began his career as a research engineer with the big French firm Dassault, but it wasn't long before he was directing Matra, then a company with about 1,000 workers. Twenty-five years later the diversified firm employs 17,000 people and runs with such efficiency that Lagardere is regarded as the best manager in France. "If enterprises are allowed to age, they are doomed," he says. "That was the problem with the 150-year-old house of Hachette when we took it over." When Lagardere took charge of the publishing company nine years ago, he replaced almost the entire management team, giving further substance to his already widespread reputation as an *enfant terrible* in the French business community. *Terrible* or not, French President François Mitterrand made Lagardere an officer of the Legion of Honor in 1985.

Not long ago the honoree went into investment banking with his son and heir apparent, Arnaud. Together they have been busily engineering mergers, acquisitions and leveraged buyouts. "I see myself as a bit like the trapeze act at the circus," says the perpetually suntanned elder Lagardere. "But I always have a safety net."

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support for public broadcasting, policies also pursued by the conservative government of Canada.

One of the most profitable commodities in the modern world is human attention. Whoever can harvest it in wholesale quantities can make money in kind. In the United States, one Nielsen rating point reflects 1 percent of the country's 90 million television households. One percentage point for a network in prime-time audience share represents more than $30 million in added revenues each year. Nothing in human experience has prepared men, women and children for the modern television techniques of fixing human attention and creating the uncritical mood required to sell goods, many of which are marginal at best to human needs.

The first demand of competitive commercial broadcasting is to freeze the hand that reaches for the channel switch. After years of experimenting with various prime-time programs in the late 1940s and early 1950s, commercial broadcasters found the basic way to maintain second-by-second attention: constant violence, gratuitous sex and deliberate manipulation of split-second change of images and sounds to make an emotional and sensory impact that leaves no time for reflection. American commercial broadcasting has produced much that is important in public affairs, programs with genuine humanistic values; it has also given us entertainment that is harmless and occasionally even uplifting. But most programming conforms to the imperative to freeze the hand that reaches for the switch.

Commercial television has also degraded the electoral process in the United States. National political campaigns are now waged mainly through ten-, twenty-, and thirty-second commercials; and since television's political dominance began in 1960, a smaller percentage of eligible citizens has bothered to vote in each subsequent election. Another dubious American gift to the world is that enduring national scandal, children's programming on commercial television. Despite the harm done by this mindless menu of violent cartoons and blatant commercialism—harm that has been confirmed by the Surgeon General's office and others—decades of parents' and educators' complaints have been ignored.

Multinational manufacturers and multinational advertising agencies now have enlarged power to suppress public messages they do not like. A year ago, Saatchi & Saatchi (the world's biggest advertising conglomerate, remember) acquired the Campbell-Mithun agency in the United States. The small agency was servicing antismoking ads for the Minnesota Department of Health, but Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company was spending $35 million then with Saatchi to advertise Kool cigarettes. The Minnesota account was only 3 percent of that, so Saatchi dropped the health department. The parent firm had learned its lesson three months earlier when one of the biggest advertisers in the world, RJR Nabisco, dropped another Saatchi subsidiary because it had created a Northwest Airlines television commercial showing passengers applauding the airline's No

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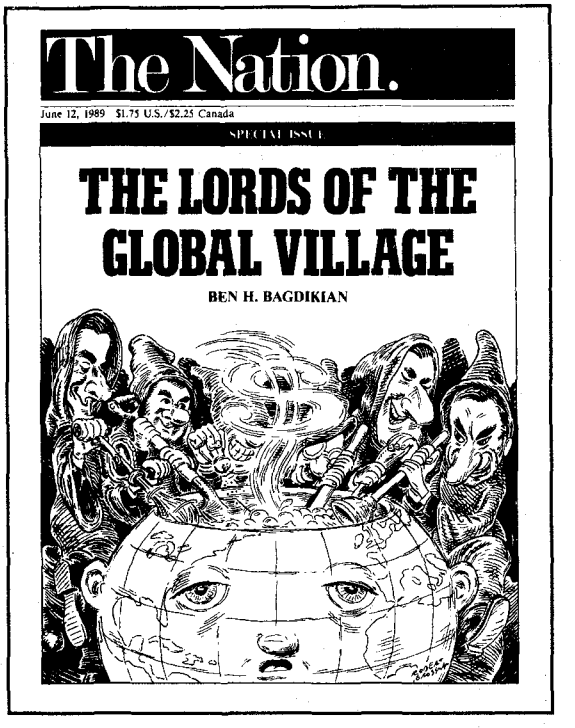

In this special issue of *The Nation*, Ben H. Bagdikian assesses the alarming growth of the communications corporation, the shrinking of the media universe and the consequent threat to "freedom and diversity in global news, information and culture." Join Bagdikian, author of *The Media Monopoly*, as he follows the trail of the media giants in their march around the world. See how they amass, homogenize, dominate and devour. Meet a gallery of media barons, from the obscure Reinhard Mohn to the notorious Rupert Murdoch.

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Smoking policy. RJR Nabisco, besides marketing food products, makes Camel, Winston and Salem cigarettes.

The linkage between smoking and deaths that now total more than 350,000 a year has been known for more than sixty years. But warnings by medical authorities have been blunted by tobacco ads carried in the media that associate cigarettes with youthfulness, good health, fashionableness, feminine grace and manly vigor. For years, even news stories gave as much weight to the claims of the tobacco industry as they did to the scientific findings of medical authorities. Television did not drop tobacco advertising until forced to by law in 1971. Newspapers and magazines quietly cheered their inheritance of all those advertising dollars. With growing education in the United States and Europe, per capita smoking is beginning to decrease. Consequently, tobacco companies are pressing their commercials in Asia and the Third World, where in recent years per capita smoking has risen 76 percent.

The goal of surrounding every human being with sales promotion every waking moment has now reached even books. Whittle Communications, half owned by Time Warner, plans soon to issue commissioned volumes from major authors like David Halberstam and John Kenneth Galbraith that will carry color ads for Federal Express and be given away to a "select" readership. For a price, Hollywood studios now place brand-name products with the labels showing in motion picture scenes. For example, Reese's Pieces candy was displayed, by contract, in the fantasy film *E.T.* This tide has reached the Soviet Union, which is selling advertising patches on its cosmonauts' space suits and the sides of space stations. Even the schools are no longer immune. Earlier this year, Whittle Communications began a national campaign to give cooperating districts $50,000 worth of television equipment in return for permission to beam into classrooms a daily twelve-minute "news" program complete with two minutes of commercials for blue jeans, candy bars and other youth products. Even without these classroom sales pitches, by age 16 the average American already has been exposed to more than 300,000 commercials.

The U.N. draft Declaration on Freedom of Information states that "all governments should pursue policies under which the free flow of information within countries and across frontiers will be protected. The right to seek and transmit information should be assured in order to enable the public to ascertain facts and appraise events." In 1960, when the declaration was introduced, it had the support of those who had in mind the controlled information of authoritarian governments. It was assumed that once governments got out of the way, "the free flow of information" and power of the public "to ascertain and appraise events" would be made possible by free-enterprise media. They were correct. The problem today is not free enterprise but the lack of it.

No small group of organizations is wise enough or unselfish enough to provide most of the news, information, scholarship, literature and entertainment for a whole society, let alone most of the world. That can come only from a large number of organizations in a field not dominated by a few, with a variety of newcomers free to enter and compete whenever and wherever existing media fail to reflect the realities and the aspirations of people's lives.

It is time for the nations of the world to meet again and make a new Declaration of Freedom of Information, this time establishing antitrust principles that will apply at home as well as across national borders. An international convention aimed at insuring a diversity of choice in the media could set limits on how many media outlets one person or one megacorporation could control, just as other international conventions have created rules for marine and air navigation, broadcast frequencies or the dumping of consumer products, where unrestrained activity by a few often damages many. The answer is not some international standard of censorship. It is no gain for freedom to replace national censorship with international censorship. The answer must be directed solely at the size of corporations, not the content of what they issue; at the restraint of economic activity that reduces voices, not at what the voices say. Belatedly, the nations of the world are recognizing that they and their corporations must be restrained from polluting the earth and its atmosphere with chemicals. The basis for all liberty—freedom of information—is also in danger of being polluted, not by chemicals but by a new mutation of that familiar scourge of the free spirit, centrally controlled information. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

An Obsession With Words

IVAN SANDERS

LOST IN TRANSLATION: A Life in a New Language. *By Eva Hoffman. E.P. Dutton. 280 pp. $18.95.*

Reading *Lost in Translation*, Eva Hoffman's fine-tuned account of disruption and reinvention, I kept wondering how meaningful this immigrant saga might be to those who know little about the world she describes in such telling detail. For me there was a shock of recognition; the Budapest of my childhood and Hoffman's Kraków might have been twin cities. The riches they offered, the secrets they withheld, the memories they banished were unnervingly similar. But could a reader without such a background really understand the oddness of postwar Eastern Europe, societies forcibly remade and yet remaining curiously unchanged?

Images of monolithic Communist rule are familiar enough, but children growing up under it were perfectly aware that experience belied the proclaimed reality, and that chinks in the uniform facade allowed forbidden things, lovely things to slip through. In retrospect it seems even clearer that bourgeois life styles and values not only survived in these countries; they flourished and were even reinforced, in a way, by the new regimes' rather prim insistence on culture. We know well that the fetishization of Art was as much a feature of the "people's democracies" as were the mechanisms of repression and terror.

The anomalies of daily existence were felt acutely yet naturally by Hoffman, the memoirist; they complicated her life but also enriched it. Thus, it does not seem all that strange that a childhood spent in Poland during the Stalinist 1950s should be called "paradise." What is more, growing up Jewish in postwar Eastern Europe (which we both did) was not quite the mournful, desolate experience many might assume it had to be. Hoffman's book reminds us that even in the shadow cast by the Holocaust, Jewish life continued: There were synagogues, there were communities, and the survivors who in those early years were eager to put yesterday's horrors behind them tried valiantly to lead normal lives. Even the thousands of non-Communist, unprivileged, semiaffiliated Jews—indeed, the majority of those who remained—managed to make a go of it for a while, and in their reluctant, resourceful ways fit into the new order. Their coddled children could be even more secure. They may have felt different, may have suffered from casual anti-Semitism (dismissed invariably as "primitive" thinking by their parents), but they were at home, they belonged; their fullest, most luminous moments were bound to a city: to the cobblestones of an ancient street, the stately trees of a promenade.

Of course it could be argued that every childhood, wherever it's spent, has its special contentments. But in Eva Hoffman's case, the kind of self-assurance and worldliness she acquired during the first impressionable fourteen years of her life didn't transfer easily to the New World. When in 1959 she was abruptly severed from her Polish roots and placed in the cultural desert of Vancouver, British Columbia, she felt like an exile, and like exiles she formed her forlornness into defiance.

At this point her culture shock works on many different levels. She discovers, for example, that her piano playing, so central to her development at home, is in Vancouver considered a charming diversion, a frill. Even her physical surroundings are alienating. After the cluttered, endearingly shabby apartments she knew in Kraków, she views streamlined suburban homes with distaste. Revealing, too, is her father's inability to deal with nonchallenging, quotidian hardships. A daredevil wheeler-dealer in his past life, a true survivor, he is stumped by Canadian normalcy. But conventional adjustment doesn't seem to be the answer either. While watching a group of Polish immigrants straining to be just folks at a suburban party, Hoffman registers the hollowness, the sadness, of the performance. She herself tries to be more honest. Attending Rice University in the 1960s, she is busy responding to new stimuli while realizing that she is pretty much out of sync with the rapidly changing times.

And yet the desire to change and to adapt is also there. She is astute and ambitious enough to realize that her European past is not only an asset but a burden, and that only by being open, generous and humble could she get closer to landscapes and mind-sets she had earlier dismissed. And the change does come—gradually at first, then dramatically. When she returns to Vancouver as an adult, she can "hear small kindnesses under the flat Canadian accents," and even in the stories of those gauchely conformist immigrants she now senses "the movements of ordinary struggles and ordinary pleasures." She reaches a point in her life when she wishes to give up being a foreigner:

> I no longer want to tell people quaint stories from the Old Country, I don't want to be told that "exotic is erotic," or that I have Eastern European intensity, or brooding Galician eyes. I no longer want to be propelled by immigrant chutzpah or desperado energy or usurper's ambition. I no longer want to have the prickly, unrelenting consciousness that I'm living in the medium of a specific culture. It's time to roll down the scrim and see the world directly, as the world.

Because its author knows the power of words ("Nothing fully exists until it is articulated"), *Lost in Translation* is most fascinating in its unique concentration on the verbal signposts of cultural bipolarity. Needless to say, the book is as much about what is gained in translation as it is about loss. In the beginning English words seem to her flat, echoless, bookish. She masters the language rather quickly, but devoid of emotional associations and resonance it remains an abstract tool that she can use skillfully to reason and argue but that lacks definition and character. To really make the language her own she knows she has to catch those echoes, feel the texture of words—she has to "add a bottom to the language . . . learned from the top." And that happens too, with the steady accretion of experience, with the daring and difficult translation of the self. She can tell she has won when she doesn't just understand an Eliot poem but "tast[es] the sounds on the tongue"; when simple terms of endearment "are filled and brimming with the motions of my desire."

The degree of linguistic and cultural assimilation is suggested in other ways, too. In describing some of her earliest experiences, Hoffman resorts more than

Ivan Sanders's translation of The Story of My Wife, *a novel by Milàn Füst, was recently issued by Vintage International.*

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once to expressions, concepts, images that are clearly later, American acquisitions. Some of these usages seem jarring almost, coming as they do in exquisitely rendered immersions in a remembered moment; but they are also inevitable, calling attention to an adult consciousness that is not simply the more reflective voice of the one-time child but a different, transplanted, reinvented self. Indeed, she confesses at the end of her story that "when I talk to myself now, I talk in English. . . . In Polish, whole provinces of adult experience are missing. I don't know Polish words for 'microchips,' or 'pathetic fallacy,' or *The Importance of Being Earnest.* If I tried talking to myself in my native tongue, it would be a stumbling conversation." And yet, like all bilingual speakers and writers, she also knows that certain words in the native tongue will always resonate with deeper meaning; they will touch you and pull you back.

Eva Hoffman's obsession with words has paid off handsomely: Her language is crisp and precise when summing up essential experience, and richly evocative when lingering on detail. She guides her narrative with the sure hand of a complete writer, alternating between essayistic meditations, recollection and sharply etched description. And because she now has the words, she can dazzle. Behind the bold summations, the clinched arguments, the many bravura passages, one senses the precocious, eager student one assumes she always was—the student who dares to reach for the arch metaphor, the recherché term. Still, abstract ruminations always yield in time to down-to-earth narration or crucial dramatization. It is a mark of the seriousness of Hoffman's endeavor that although she speaks candidly about her life, about family, friends, loves, she eschews the chattily confessional mode. We hear of an unsuccessful marriage, but only in passing, and we find out very little about her present job (she is an editor of *The New York Times Book Review*), though this kind of inside story would surely interest many readers.

What we do get is the more penetrating story of a creative transformation. And the point is not so much that she "made it," that the immigrant Polish girl became a New York intellectual, but that this intellectual—harried, bold, ambivalent—is as much a reflection of her Polish-Jewish childhood as she is of the medium to which she assimilated. On a visit to her homeland she sees herself as a Polish-speaking foreigner. Yet on a train between Warsaw and Kraków, watching her badly dressed, amiable fellow passengers taking out their dried sausage and vodka, she feels that "all of this will be forever more natural, more uncannily natural to me than the immaculate commuters folding *The Wall Street Journal* neatly in half on the Long Island train."

At this stage in her life she accepts her role as mediator between two cultures. When it comes to analyzing family relationships, for instance, she recognizes that her approach is thoroughly American now; she is hooked on Freudian categories and insights. But she also understands, and defends, her Polish friends' bewilderment at these insights. ("What's this thing Americans have about their mothers?" they keep asking her.) Eva Hoffman may have acquiesced in her "betwixt and between" state, but ultimately her acquiescence implies contentment, a quiet affirmation. "Right now, this is the place where I'm alive," she says at the end of her narrative. "I am here now." □

Hou(daille) Done It

DAVID BENSMAN

WHEN THE MACHINE STOPPED: A Cautionary Tale From Industrial America. *By Max Holland. Harvard Business School Press. 335 pp. $22.95.*

Max Holland's *When the Machine Stopped: A Cautionary Tale From Industrial America* appears at just the right time. Concern about America's declining position in the world economy has turned trade and industrial policy into a hot topic in Washington. Debate over the proposal for the United States to develop the FSX fighter plane jointly with Japan for use in the Japanese Air Defense Force reveals how seriously U.S. political leaders now take issues that were dismissed as "socialistic" just a decade ago.

An odd alliance of liberal and conservative proponents of forceful Federal policy on trade and industrial development argues that without vigorous government action, the United States will become hopelessly dependent on other nations for technologies crucial to military security and economic prosperity. An equally odd coalition of opponents from the left and the right counter that Federal action will distort the marketplace and make our economy even more subject to pork-barrel and special interest politics.

Curiously enough, it was during the Reagan Administration that industrial policy began to get a serious hearing in Washington. The near collapse of the U.S. semiconductor industry threatened to make the nation's computers dependent on Japanese suppliers. This prospect so frightened official Washington that it adopted an industrial policy to insure American self-reliance in semiconductor manufacturing. The result was Sematech, a government-sponsored consortium of high-tech firms operating with Defense Department subsidies to develop a new generation of computer chips.

Rising Japanese exports of machine tools to the United States were a second source of alarm in Reagan-era America. In this case Houdaille Industries was responsible for arousing public concern. In 1981 Houdaille, a conglomerate with substantial holdings in the machine tool industry, appealed to the Federal government to take action against Japanese exports on the ground that the Japanese government had improperly targeted the U.S. machine-tool market for penetration. A skillful public relations effort made Houdaille's charges the focal point for the effort within the Reagan Administration to get tough with Japan. Clyde Prestowitz, former Counselor on Japanese Affairs to the Secretary of Commerce, took up Houdaille's argument. Although President Reagan ultimately turned down Houdaille's petition for relief in order to preserve the amity of U.S.-Japan relations, Prestowitz gave further attention to Houdaille's claims in his 1988 book, *Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead*, which appears to have greatly influenced the Bush Administration. Prestowitz cites the Houdaille case as an example of how Japanese industrial policy can victimize efficient American businesses, thereby crippling our economy.

Max Holland's *When the Machine Stopped* contains a different analysis of Houdaille's case, one which illustrates

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perfectly the potential pitfalls of Federal industrial policy-making. Holland, a contributing editor to *The Nation*, chronicles the decline of Burgmaster, a California machine tool company bought by the Houdaille conglomerate, so he can demonstrate that incompetent corporate bureaucrats—not Japanese officials—are primarily to blame for America's competitive failures. What's needed, Holland argues, is not protection for poorly run businesses but improvements in their operations, not special interest policy-making but an end to financial deregulation and excessive military spending. It's a compelling argument.

Burgmaster, where Holland's father worked as a machinist, began as a small, family-run business. Its founder, Fred Burg, was a practical machinist who knew the needs of the trade and had the engineering ingenuity to find new ways of meeting them. Starting up in 1944 with a few thousand dollars, Burg, his son and son-in-law built a successful little company whose innovative machine-making products were used by some of the nation's best-known manufacturers.

Burgmaster was a well-run entrepreneurial manufacturing concern. Its owners knew their customers' requirements and weren't afraid to get their nails dirty investigating problems on the shop floor. Although the firm wasn't able to match the wages paid by nearby defense contractors, it was able to attract and retain skilled craftsmen because it made it possible for employees to take pride in their work, to learn new skills, to feel a sense of participation in the enterprise. Burgmaster's owners plowed their profits back into the business, expanding operations, designing new products—and always taking risks. Burgmaster tools had a reputation for quality, the firm's engineers customized jobs to win new orders and suppliers were paid promptly and fully.

All this made Burgmaster indistinguishable from dozens of well-run and successful manufacturers; the firm gained distinction and notoriety only after it was acquired by the Houdaille conglomerate in 1965. At first, the move seemed to make sense; Fred Burg was getting old, and the firm needed money for expansion. Houdaille had a reputation for treating the managers of firms it acquired well, and it poured a lot of money into modernizing Burgmaster's physical plant. Nevertheless, under conglomerate management, Burgmaster began to decline.

Houdaille's management from afar stripped Burgmaster of the qualities that had made it successful in the first place. Corporate decision-makers didn't know much about their customers' needs; plant managers were more concerned with providing the home office with accurate forecasts than with developing products; the new shop supervisors treated workers as drones. In a few years, Burgmaster lost its technological leadership; equally important, as the firm became more bureaucratic, it could no longer keep its highly skilled machinists. By the late 1970s, Burgmaster and Houdaille were in trouble.

In 1979, the investment banking firm Kohlberg, Kravis and Roberts showed Houdaille management that recent changes in the tax code meant that the best way to keep the firm under its current management while raising new funds was to undertake a leveraged buy-out. Houdaille's equity was converted into a massive debt; K.K.R. took a majority position on the firm's board of directors and Houdaille gambled desperately that it would generate enough money to pay the debt off. Unfortunately, the recessions of 1979 and 1982 ate up the projected cash flow until the machines at Burgmaster stopped forever.

Closely comparing Holland's treatment of the Houdaille case with Prestowitz's, one cannot fail to be impressed with Holland's analysis. First, Burgmaster and Houdaille were faltering for reasons that had little to do with the Japanese. Second, Houdaille's decision to burden itself with a mountain of debt just before the bottom fell out undoubtedly doomed Burgmaster regardless of what toolmakers in Japan did. Holland also deflates some of the most convincing Japan-bashing rhetoric. While Houdaille, and Prestowitz, charged that the Japanese government had funneled hundreds of millions of dollars of subsidies to the machine tool industry to foster its development, Holland shows that this sum went to support a large array of *machinery* industries, including steel, auto and electronics, while the machine tool companies got an insignificant sum. He charges that Houdaille executives as well as Prestowitz knew that the subsidy issue was a red herring and used it anyway. Finally, Holland scores important points by telling the story of a Japanese machine tool firm that took away Burgmaster's business by adhering to the very practices Burgmaster abandoned after it was taken over by Houdaille.

There can be no doubt of the cogency of Holland's cautionary tale. In a nation dominated by corporate interests, Feder-

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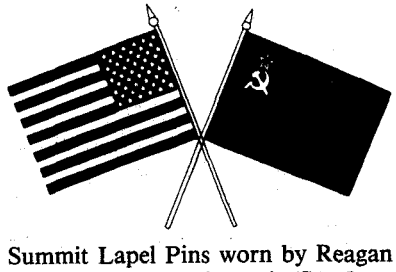
al trade laws are prone to abuse by incompetent managers trying to shield themselves from the consequences of their own folly. But this is not the whole story. Between 1974 and 1983, misguided and sometimes incredibly stupid Federal policies sapped the vitality of well-managed American businesses as well as poorly managed ones. High interest rates, the strong dollar, lax enforcement of trade laws and restrictive fiscal and monetary policies all worked against domestic manufacturers.

Take the machine tool industry. While Houdaille created a lot of its own problems, other American machine toolmakers had good reason to complain about Federal policies. Holland's case study approach causes him to ignore the way government indifference hurt two of the machine makers' prime customers, the steel and auto industries. In addition, Federal complacency about surging U.S. imports of oil from the Middle East reduced orders from the domestic energy industry. Japan's restriction of its manufacturing imports further limited demand for American machines. Throw in high interest rates, the strong dollar and the twin recessions of 1979 and 1982 and it's little wonder that even well-managed machine toolmakers suffered severely.

And so we come to a dilemma. America needs industrial and trade policies to promote economic efficiency and create skilled, high-paying jobs. What America is likely to get is pork-barrel, special interest legislation disguised as patriotism. With conservatives in power, perhaps the best we can hope for is a debate which clarifies the difference between the needs of America's working people and the self-serving power grabs of the corporate apologists. Max Holland's finely crafted *When the Machine Stopped* is an important contribution to that debate. □



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THEATER.

MOIRA HODGSON

Peer Gynt
The Member of the Wedding

On the rare occasions when it is performed, Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* is almost always severely cut (it is over five hours long). But Mark Lamos, artistic director of the Hartford Stage Company in Connecticut, has plunged in and produced a full-length version, shown in two parts. *Peer Gynt* has been a challenge to scholars and critics since it was first published in 1867. The play concerns one man's epic journey through life and self-discovery. Gynt is a perpetual adolescent, a dreamer, a chronic liar, a charmer and a fool. He tells outrageous lies to his mother, Ase, who alternately worships and nags him; he goes to a wedding and runs off with the bride. He is seduced by a troll and fathers a monster. He makes his fortune nineteenth-century-style, trading slaves and idols. After a spell in a madhouse, he ends up in a shipwreck. But his muse, Solvig, the ideal beloved, remains faithfully waiting for him throughout the years of his odyssey.

Lamos is an enormously talented director who has made a name for himself with his reinterpretations of the classics. Making these plays relevant for contemporary audiences is a tricky task, but after viewing his flawed but fascinating *Measure for Measure* recently at New York's Lincoln Center I was curious to see what he would make of Ibsen's play. I found the production imaginative and interesting but full of movement that seemed ultimately to be lacking in destination.

As Gynt, Richard Thomas gives an energetic performance and delivers each line of poetry as if it were a challenge. He plays throughout as if he were Henry V rallying his troops at the battle of Agincourt. You see less a man gradually becoming aware of his potential self than an impetuous youngster rushing headlong into trouble. The dramatic tension of this play (or poem to be precise, for Ibsen had not originally intended it for the stage) springs from the struggles within the central character. Nothing really registers with Gynt, but he remains, in the words of Rolf Fjelde, "the pilot model of the hollow man of our own time, rendered perplexed and anxious by problems of identity and direction." Thomas never ages physically, but continues to lead the troops, real or imaginary, right to the end. The role needs a subtlety and shading that this production doesn't provide, and to keep Gynt forever young while others grow old around him is a mistake.

Thomas is not helped by the translation. Nabokov, talking about Pushkin, pointed out the dangers of translating poetry into rhyming verse. Gerry Bamman and Irene B. Berman have gone for a slangy contemporary version that has to stretch itself to rhyme "emperor" with "temper" and comes up with such pearls as

> He's a milquetoast, he's a scarecrow.
> Well, now he's her inamorato.

John Conklin's set design on the other hand is inventive and entertaining. Toys are used throughout in clever ways, beginning in Gynt's nursery and reappearing later in various guises. Little wooden houses spread out on a green silk cloth form the set for the village wedding. White silk becomes the snowy mountains, yellow silk dotted with purple palm trees the beach where Gynt drinks wine and smokes cigars with his capitalist cronies. He mounts a huge toy pig with the Woman in Green, the troll with whom he fathers a child, and he rides off into the desert on a blown-up version of the hobbyhorse of his childhood, away from the monkeys who pelt him with little balls of excrement.

Such Brechtian staging is fragile and quickly spoiled by the intrusion of the literal. The trolls enter to the strains of the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*. Is this the music with which to introduce the monsters that live in the dark side of our imagination? In fact, it is the grossly comic troll scene that points up the main flaw in this often engaging production. The trolls, with their Miss Piggy snouts and long thick gray tails, are more droll than troll. Their King (Stephen Rowe) does a brilliant takeoff on Al Pacino in *Scarface*, walking in a dislocated strut, blowing out his paunch and snarling in a gravelly Mafia-chief voice—but it produces laughter that wasn't Ibsen's intention. The bowl of mead Gynt drinks at his initiation by the trolls here becomes a bowl of urine noisily provided by the Woman in Green—again, stretching into broad comedy. And the troll baby, who should be an object of horror, is comic, limping along behind his mother with a large milk bottle in his mouth, twisting his tail behind him.

The trolls stand for the terrors of the

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unconscious, what Joseph Campbell describes as "the inconvenient or resisted psychological powers that we have not thought or dared to integrate into our lives . . . they carry keys that open the whole realm of the desired and feared adventure of the discovery of self." That sense is missing from Lamos's production, which is rich in invention and humor, but lacks Ibsen's poetry. This *Peer Gynt* is not the least bit unsettling. As any child will tell you, laugh at your trolls and they go away.

Twelve-year-old Frankie Addams, the heroine of Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*, is also on a quest for discovery of self. She longs to escape the confines of the "ugly old kitchen" which is her world, and discover the larger world outside. But that world, as we see from the adults around her, is in many ways even more confining.

Harold Clurman, who directed the original production in 1950—starring Ethel Waters, Julie Harris and Brandon de Wilde—saw the action of the play as springing from Frankie's dream of becoming "a member of the whole world" and saw the other characters of the play as variants of her struggle for connection. Harold Scott, who directs the present revival at the Roundabout Theatre, has been quoted as saying that Clurman directed the play from a white point of view, regarding Berenice as a "mammy." But, says Scott, "I'm directing it as a black man who has been through the 1960s."

I did not see the original version or the subsequent film, so I can't compare them with Scott's production. But I find it hard to imagine that anyone, even in 1950, could sit through this play, the pinnacle of Southern Gothic, without flinching at the sorry picture it presents of race relations. Looking at it now, in the light of all that has gone on since then, Frankie's struggle seems minor compared with the hopelessness of the struggle facing the black characters. In the South of 1945 a white child could, as in the play, feel closest to her "mammy." But by the end of the play, Frankie is ready to become part of the white world. Berenice, the housekeeper, meanwhile, is left with nothing. John Henry, Frankie's young cousin and a frequent visitor to the kitchen, has died of meningitis. Berenice's only son, arrested for an attack on a white man who refused to serve him, has hanged himself in his cell.

Scott has drawn excellent performances from Esther Rolle, who is a dignified and restrained Berenice; Calvin Lennon Armitage as John Henry; and Amelia Campbell, who is exceedingly convincing if at times a little too fidgety as she pushes her adolescent being, as Clurman put it, "like a sharp plant struggling upward through the resistant soil."

The Member of the Wedding has its flaws, but the saddest part of seeing this play nearly forty years later is the realization that in the interim so little has been accomplished. □

FILMS.

JONATHAN BURTON

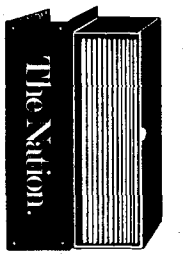
The Vietnam Film Project

In a film called *Brothers and Relations*, a newly returned Vietnam War veteran named Hien sits in a local bar, numbed by liquor, without a job or prospects for one. Rock music plays on the radio, and a singer asks vacantly, "Living, what does it mean?" Hien is a stranger in a strange city. Even his own family is concerned more with acquiring stereo systems and status than with the problems of soldiers from a war they would just as soon forget. Hien's not alone. A friend tells him, "Lots of veterans around Hanoi these days."

Welcome to Hollywood, Vietnamese-style. Instead of the epic glory of farm tractors, directors are filming themes of social disaffection. *Brothers and Relations*, directed by Tran Va and Nguyen Huu Luyen, deals with the alienation of the returning soldier Hien and sharply condemns a system that refuses him identity. The 1986 film recalls *Coming Home*, the 1978 Academy Award–winning production that illustrated the American veteran's trauma after the war in Vietnam. Although Hien ultimately reaches an inner peace, *Brothers and Relations* lingers on bleakness and anger. That's pretty strong stuff for a country where not long ago standard movie-house fare consisted of Eurasian actors playing ruthless American invaders fighting valiant Vietnamese liberators.

"I am angry," says film director Nguyen Hong Sen. "In the society, certain people are abusing their power to do good to themselves and harm to other people."

Jonathan Burton is a New York City–based writer who specializes in Asian political and business affairs.



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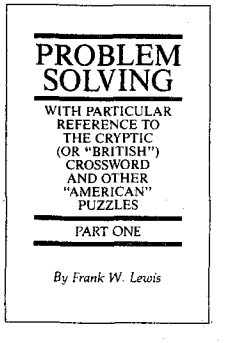
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He is at work on a new film, *The Refrain of Hope*, which confronts social and bureaucratic ills. "Vietnamese filmmakers are concentrating their efforts to criticize the negative phenomena in society," explains Nguyen Thu, director of the government-sponsored Vietnam Cinema Department. "They criticize bureaucracy; they criticize the state of relations between people. They come up with new problems that, according to them, the government should be concerned about."

Hong Sen and Thu spoke through a translator in New York City, where they and Hai Ninh, director of the Hanoi Film Studio, attended a film festival that showcased several Vietnamese works, most not seen before in the West. Six features, filmed in black-and-white with English subtitles, will spend eighteen months on a tour that organizers hope will cover twenty-five U.S. cities, including Boston, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Chicago and San Francisco. A run at the Asia Society in Manhattan ended in mid-May, following screenings at the University of California, Los Angeles, in early April and at the Hawaii International Film Festival last December. The U.C.L.A. showing drew heated protest from a hostile and politically vocal Vietnamese community. Demonstrators branded the movies "K.G.B.-approved" and shouted that "Joe McCarthy was right." The U.C.L.A. Film and Television Archive received two bomb threats.

Although Vietnamese movies are made only with Hanoi's approval, and the festival's films stress the North's traditional values over the South's more Western leanings, *Brothers and Relations* and the satirical *A Quiet Little Town* carry

NEW YEAR'S AT THE METHODISTS

That Christmas our lost dinosaur
ruled over Baker's Beach,
in whose mutinied sands were mired
the Portuguese men-of-war.

They trailed from old issues of *Life*,
their tentacles filthy, like plastic.
On New Year's Eve we were minded
by the Methodist minister's wife.

Over his battered Ouija
the Reverend Mr. Potts
watched as his overturned cup
spelled out tales of Fiji

where teams of tattooed rowers
had ferried him upriver.
In his hut the chief of the chiefs
stored power motors.

With ritual bowls of Coke
slim maidens offered their charms
which Potts as politely refused.
Outside the thermometer broke

at not-so-absolute zero.
Jungle ferns formed on the panes.
In the dream of his own language
every man's a hero.

But what of Mrs. Potts,
who trolled from her antique dory?
She gave us a bushel of clams
called beauty spots

and stacked her Methodist dollars
in a canvas burial shroud
stuffed behind shelves
of mildewed Chaucerian scholars.

William Logan

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strong indictments of modern Vietnamese life. They are tolerated as part of the government's fledgling policy of *doi moi*, or social and economic renovation, initiated by Nguyen Van Linh in late 1986 following his appointment as Communist Party General Secretary. This Vietnamese version of *perestroika*, cautiously encouraging enterprise and trade, is the vehicle government leaders hope will help carry the nation out of poverty.

Le Duc Tien's *A Quiet Little Town*, released in 1986, is a stinging look at bureaucracy and self-serving ambition. En route to a wedding in a remote village, an important government minister from Hanoi is involved in an automobile accident and rushed to the town's medical clinic, which discharges and then readmits sick patients to meet its annual production quota. The villagers envision rewards for saving the minister's life: even the young surgeon sees a successful operation as a ticket to a post in Hanoi. But no one wants to abrogate rules about operating on an official in anything but a modern hospital, causing one exasperated doctor to blurt that "the patient could die of paperwork." The patient's deterioration makes an operation unavoidable, and it succeeds. But when the minister's family arrives, it's discovered that the patient is not the minister but his driver. A clinic in a nearby county has saved the true official's life.

A Quiet Little Town and *Brothers and Relations* are regrettably the only films in the program to deal with Vietnam after the war. The other four, including Dang Nhat Minh's lyrical 1984 story *When the Tenth Month Comes*, Nguyen Xuan Son's 1986 melodrama *Fairy Tale for 17-Year-Olds* and Nguyen Hong Sen's compassionate 1979 feature *The Abandoned Field—Free Fire Zone*, focus on life during wartime and its hardships and heroics. The festival's lone documentary is the historical *Victory at Dien Bien Phu*, from 1964, which shows in detail the decisive 1954 battle that drummed the French out of Indochina.

More than thirty years later, *Brothers and Relations* and *A Quiet Little Town* ask an underlying question: "War, what is it good for?" Unlike some American films that broach the issue, the Vietnamese answer is not "Absolutely nothing." Vietnamese directors are far from opposing the revolution. But they do condemn the government excess that has corrupted revolutionary goals. Victory is good, but not good enough.

Liberalization in film has followed the prevailing winds in Hanoi and comes as the Communist Party has begun to dismantle bureaucratic layers and purge corrupt members. As many as 30 percent of Vietnam's nearly 62 million people are unemployed. Its ramshackle economy produces a pitiful wage. After nearly five decades of fighting foreigners, Vietnam now has only the enemy in the mirror to face. Will renovation one day lead Vietnamese to crowd the streets of Hanoi shouting for political freedoms and speedy reform? Does *doi moi*'s undisguised invitation to personal gain mean the revolution has failed?

Nguyen Thu, who is also a member of Vietnam's National Assembly, is quiet. "It does not necessarily mean that," he says slowly. "The long war pushed our economy down to a low point. Now we have to build a new society. How to do that is a big problem for us that really has forced us to change our thinking." One path to popularity is appeasing your adversaries, who then might be your friends. Vietnam has pledged to withdraw its 50,000 soldiers from neighboring Cambodia by the end of September, ending a decade of occupation. This would remove a major obstacle to rapprochement with Southeast Asian nations who regard Vietnam's presence in Cambodia as destabilizing. A pullout would also redirect scarce resources from military to social needs and relieve the nearly bankrupt Vietnamese treasury.

The troop withdrawal creates new problems, though, among them that thousands of returning soldiers will be looking for work just like Hien in *Brothers and Relations*. Vietnamese leaders believe that it will also attract badly needed foreign investment, thereby creating jobs. Vietnam will likely receive funds from public agencies such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, but private business ventures could be limited unless the Bush Administration ends the U.S. embargo on products with Vietnamese content imposed immediately after the fall of Saigon in April 1975.

In China and the Soviet Union, network television cameras record economic and political reform and broadcast it around the world, but in Vietnam the only cameras to document change are the filmmakers'. They offer us a glimpse of a nation that, although reunified, is broken in ways that Ho Chi Minh could never have conceived.

For film tour dates and locations, call Geoffrey Gilmore at the U.C.L.A. Film and Television Archive, (213) 206-8013. □

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LETTERS.

(*Continued From Page 798*)

looked at the young people surrounding him and saw their eyes registering no signs of recognition. Then his gaze met Yusef's and held. "I hear you, brother, I hear you," Yusef said, nodding. The understanding that passed between them bowled me over. I realized that night that it was possible to live a political life, to keep on fighting as one grew older, that not all the Yippies had turned into yuppies, no matter what the mainstream pundits proclaimed.

Abbie Hoffman spoke to hundreds of students at about fifty colleges every year. If he reached a fraction of them as he did me, at that crucial moment in their political awakening, our loss is enormous.

Robin Epstein

CHORDS OF FAME

Washington

In 1986 I visited Abbie Hoffman, who was living in a cramped New York City walk-up several floors above a manicurist. As we talked, Abbie, who was just about to turn 50, griped about his economic situation. He wasn't making much money—he showed me his tax returns as proof—and was finding it hard to provide for his family. He knew he had sacrificed big bucks in order to pursue the causes that captured his overactive and unique imagination. In fact, at that time he was turning down lucrative offers for TV commercials and an appearance on *Miami Vice*. What riled him was the thought that some ill-informed person out there in media-land might not realize that Abbie had *not* strayed. He shoved a videocassette into his VCR. On came *The Big Fix*, a movie released while Abbie was underground. In the film, a detective played by Richard Dreyfuss searches for a former radical leader who has disappeared, a character modeled on Abbie. When Dreyfuss finally finds him, the former Yippie is a successful ad man living in a house with a pool in Beverly Hills. An agitated Abbie pointed at the screen: "You get a choice. I could have that. It would take two years." With his media skills and ingenuity, maybe it would have taken him only eighteen months. But he had made his choice. Until the very end, Abbie walked it like he talked it. That's a pretty mean feat.

David Corn

LONG TIME COMING

The Student Action Union opened its spring organizing conference at Carleton College in Minnesota on April 14 with the following tribute to Abbie Hoffman, who was a member of its advisory board; it has been shortened here to meet space constraints. The Student Action Union is a national multi-issue organization founded last July in North Carolina at a follow-up meeting to the National Student Convention held in February 1988 at Rutgers University.

New Brunswick, N.J.

There was so much happening at the convention at Rutgers that most of us will have a difficult time just remembering, never mind agreeing on, everything that took place. Problems within the student movement were made clear. Debates were framed that rage even to this day. Important alliances and friendships were started. Several organizations, including our Student Action Union, were eventually formed as a direct result of the Rutgers call. But there was at least one moment that almost all of us remember very well. On Saturday night, as it slowly became clear that overall unity was going to be an extremely difficult goal to reach, Abbie Hoffman gave a speech on a special panel. It was a rousing, laughter-drawing, emotional and extraordinarily intellectual plea for us to emphasize our common goals; to remember that our struggle was not with each other but with immoral and unethical institutions and people outside that meeting; to avoid those inner turmoils that have burned out so many young activists over the years; and for us not to be afraid of the power we could find if we could just come together. Abbie talked about many of the vital issues facing us in the late 1980s, but the thrust of his speech was that it had been a long time since students had traveled so far to attempt to achieve something of such historic potential.

It *had* been a long time. And it would have been an even longer time if it had not been for Abbie Hoffman. From the moment the National Student Convention was conceived, right up to his death, Abbie Hoffman spent more time offering us encouragement, advice and even fund-raising help than any other activist of his generation. When students (and journalists) across the United States were asked how they found out about the convention, the reply we heard more often than any other was: "from Abbie Hoffman." Along with his other endeavors, Abbie gave his heart and soul to see a new national student organization develop into something that could be a real force to help bring equality, justice, radical change and real humanity to this country.

People all across the world will remember Abbie's incredible life. But it is especially up to us, the students and youth who received Abbie's special encouragement and teaching, to keep his spirit alive. It is especially up to us to continue the kind of work and struggle that was indivisible from his life. We are proud to call Abbie Hoffman a hero and mentor, and honored to have been able to call Abbie Hoffman a friend. Many of us in the Student Action Union would like to dedicate our efforts at this conference and in the future to Abbie Hoffman. Abbie, we miss you and we will always love you.

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Crossword Puzzle No. 2246

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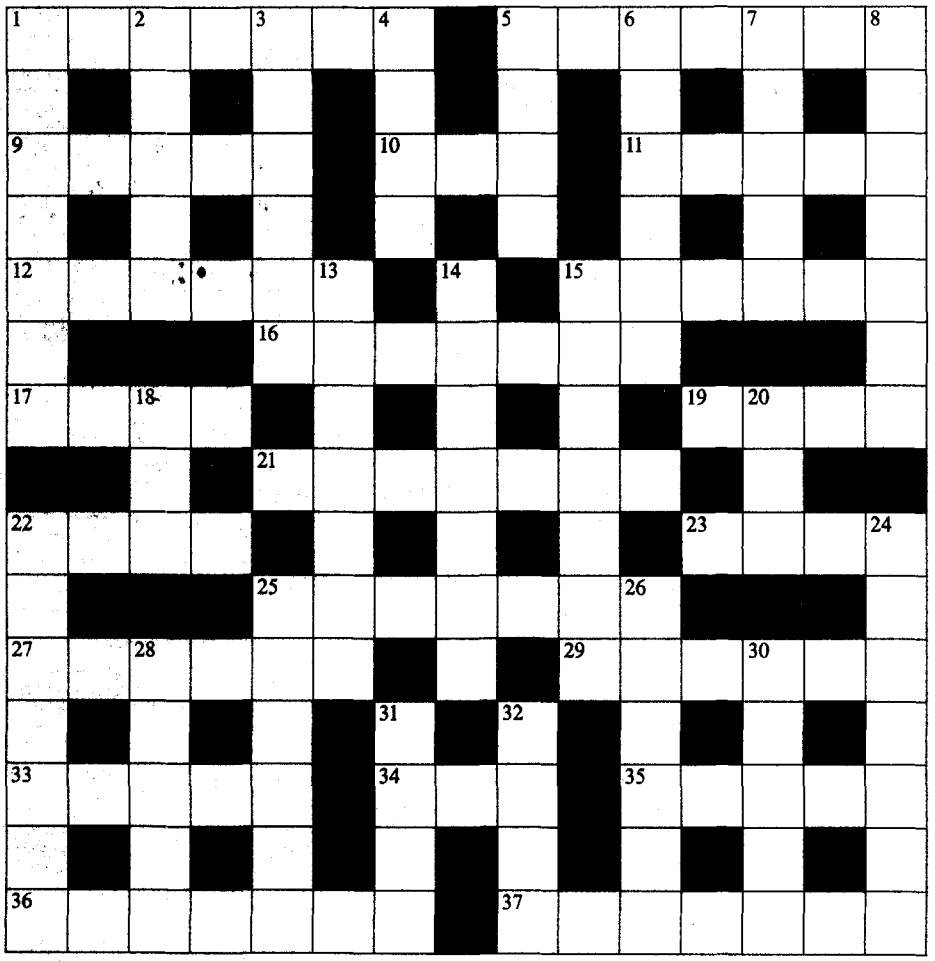

ACROSS

1 Timberline, such as Wilson discovered. (7)
5 Count an awful lot of blood being essential to him? (7)
9 Possibly slain, which might be driven home if not found at one's fingertips. (5)
10, 5 down and 11 People finished with what a body does in time to certain music. (Reformation if one does?)(4,4,4)
12 Make a row and the police might want to place you in this. (4-2)
15 Le Mans has such a monthly turnout. (6)
16 One in the dock, perhaps, could have gone west. (7)
17 and 21 Showing a certain amount of intuitive understanding when such things are easily viewable. (6,5)
19, 33, 34 and 35 Descriptive of the last movement of Beethoven's Pastoral symphony. (4,5,3,5)
21 See 17 across
22 The wrong name for the last word in the service, possibly. (4)
23 Dies out this way for the last time, especially for Caesar. (4)
25 You may have one at the bank, which is quite a tale! (7)
27 See 30 down
29 The old pin-up to take by the hand, with the French! (6)
33, 34 and 35 See 19
36 The loser may have, as the tree bore fruit. (7)
37 See 18 down

DOWN

1 Homer perhaps beats down the contents. (7)
2 Responsible for some tears—one goes on and on around it! (5)
3 What they do when the lower berth is occupied? (4,2)
4 Point to the little devil—as they say, a weakling. (4)
5 See 10 across
6 A woman's were, partly. (Look on last page for a week-old one.) (7)
7 What the Russian tour always shows, if you go far enough inland. (5)
8 Could the character repeatedly appearing in a Faulkner title be Davidson, logically? (7)
13 A light sailing vessel made of pine can make a wreck of it. (7)
14 In addition, metal can hold wood, which will ultimately be ash. (7)
15 "Inside China?" She is confused—and perhaps gets entangled. (7)
18 and 37 across After getting even, this might be an important point. (3-7)
20 See 30
22 If there is a risk, one should certainly know how to figure it out! (7)
24 In haste, a merchantman might be taken for a smaller boat! (7)
25 Reputedly a great ruler, but led far afield. (6)
26 Rather melancholy, like a poorly posed sitter. (6)
28 A rather slangy term for your sweetheart—when ignored, that is. (5)
30 and 20, and 27 across Two things a lineman might be expected to do which might help get the piano upstairs. (5,3,6)
31 You might find game after the dust has settled. (4)
32 "To be?" It's one of the better-known examples. (4)

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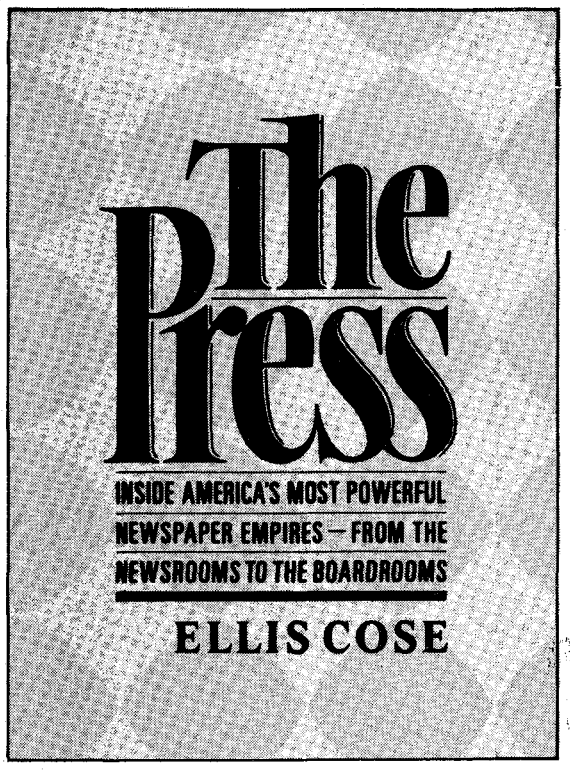

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